

ASSIST SPRING 2019 NEWSLETTER



RESTORING GLORY TO CHARIS FELLOWSHIP CHURCHES

Our dream is to see the Charis Fellowship of Churches become a movement across North America.

Shortly after beginning operations in 2017 we realized that in order to see our fellowship expand, we would be called to pay close attention to Charis churches that are at risk of closing their doors permanently. This has led us to actively pursue partnerships with churches to help them establish a long and fruitful future.

FEATURED CHURCHES

03 Ft. Myers, FL

05 Dryhill, KY

06 Bowling Green, OH

06 Pataskala, OH

07 Ephrata, PA

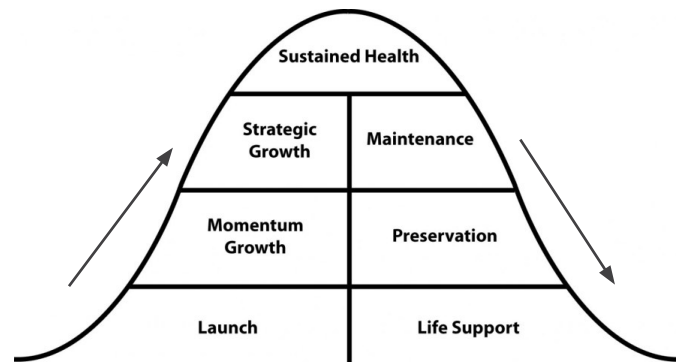
WHAT IS CHURCH REVITALIZATION?

There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens...

No one likes the idea of a church dying. But, as with all living organisms, there are natural seasons in the life-cycle of a church that may indicate that its prime years are in the past and that preservation, or even survival, becomes the sole focus of the church. Long gone are the days when new disciples are being made and God's Kingdom is impacted by the ministry of church.

The Charis Fellowship has its own stories of churches that have been revitalized and rejuvenated for new, fruitful seasons of ministry. Grace Community Church of Goshen, IN (Jim Brown) and Grace Fellowship of Pickerington, OH (Keith Minier) stand out as examples of churches that have been revived through embracing new leadership and a new direction for their churches.

Our God is in the business of bringing dead things back to life. So, it is by faith and in service to Him that we believe for the future of churches in our fellowship who may be in jeopardy of closing their doors forever.



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OUR APPROACH TO REVITALIZATION

Leading a church through revitalization is a strategic process that requires a firm commitment to a new vision. After working with church leaders to attain congregational unity in a decision to revitalize, we then conduct a search to identify a qualified pastoral leader who can cast vision, build relationships and mobilize a team for the work.

Once that leader is in place, Assist provides coaching and consulting for the pastor and his team to assess the church's health and exegete the culture they are called to reach. From there we develop a plan that will address the weaknesses or deficiencies and capitalize on the unique gifts within that church. The ultimate goal is to develop a plan that positions the church to become effective at reaching lost people in its community; helping them find their hope in Jesus Christ.

This is not a cookie-cutter formula, as each church and its setting are unique. However, there are clear, biblical components to a healthy, fruitful church that must be present for any church to thrive and live out its full potential for Jesus.



VILLAS GRACE FT MYERS, FL

The Ft. Myers Grace Brethren Church was planted in 1963. For over 55 years, this church has been embedded in a community known as The Villas. It is a racially and socially diverse community that has grown up around the church over the years and is desperately in need of a life-giving gospel-centered church.

Matt Niemier, his wife Hope and their two children have been familiar faces in several Charis Fellowship churches since Matt's graduation from Grace College and Seminary. Some know Matt as a barber. Others might know him as a rapper. What he desires to be known as, above everything else, is a disciple-maker.

After relocating to Florida, Matt and Hope began to build a core group of friends that they believed might eventually be a church plant. But after a season of prayer and reflection began to feel as though God was leading them

to take a lead role in setting a new course for the Ft. Myers Grace Brethren Church.

In the spring of 2018, long-time pastor Steve Shipley handed the reigns of the church to Matt, who then brought a vision team to the Assist Spring Bootcamp to begin making plans for a revitalization.

The last 12 months have been a season of exploration for the church as they have begun to modernize their building and bring a fresh expression of worship to their Sunday services. They have also initiated a strategic partnership with a local elementary school by launching a "Good News Club" for the children of their neighborhood.

You can find out more at: www.villasgrace.com



Little doubt exists that many churches in America are sick. The statistics paint a dismal picture. But I remain optimistic about churches across our nation because we serve a God of all possibilities.

Can a dying church find life? Absolutely. But it takes leaders who are willing to do the hard work of leading their churches toward health.

- Thom Rainer



In John 17:21 Jesus prayed for the church to be “one” as He and the Father are one. The members of the godhead are perfectly unified in mission and method. We can therefore infer that unity within any church must include a singleminded focus on mission and method. Our first steps in activating a revitalization plan for any Charis Fellowship church begins with a unified body of believers who are committed to discovering a new mission and method for their church.

1 Unified Shepherds

Before any revitalization project can begin, there must be a concensus amongst the pastors and elders of a church that a new vision for the church must be explored. Any areas of division or tension must be addressed and a common commitment must be in place.

2 Unified Leaders

Every church has key volunteers and voices that have been significant contributors to the current ministry operations. It is important for the unified shepherds to gain the trust of these individuals in order for a revitalization process to be constructive and healthy.

3 Unified Congregation

Once the pastors, elders and volunteer leaders in the church have all reached a place of unity, a vision for the rest of the congregation must be communicated and there must be reasonable time for these families and individuals to adopt an open spirit about change in their church.

Keeping God's Story Alive in God's Country

Pastor Sam and Betty Ann Baer are preparing to ride off into the sunset. After 40 years of serving the Victory Mountain Grace Brethren Chapel, they will be relocating to Oklahoma to enjoy retirement near eight of their 22 grandchildren. Pastor Sam, a graduate of Grace College and Seminary, was called to this Home Missions congregation in 1979 after five years in St. Petersburg, FL, where he served under the leadership of the late Bill Tweeddale. It is a bittersweet departure for this sweet, faithful couple who have spent four decades bringing the Gospel to the people of their rural Kentucky community.

If you have ever had the opportunity to drive through Appalachia, you might wonder why more people do not live there. It is beautiful country. Rolling hills, lush forests, freshwater streams and lakes. In the early 1960's Leslie County, KY was one of the fastest growing regions in the USA; not because people were moving to the



Dan Cosentino (left) has been instrumental in helping Assist coordinate a revitalization plan for Victory Mountain.

VICTORY MOUNTAIN GRACE BRETHREN CHAPEL DRYHILL, KY



The Victory Mountain family praying over Nathan Bryant during one of his visits to eastern Kentucky.

area, but because of a true-to-life baby boom. It was not uncommon for families to have 12 or more children in their homes.

Nonetheless, the region has been one of the more impoverished areas in the nation, with low-income, high unemployment and a strained education system.

For our fellowship, the church in Dryhill stands as a historical, legacy church. Started in 1950, we are praying that a pastoral leadership transition and a revitalization plan will enable this church to continue to seek and save the lost of eastern Kentucky as it has for more than half a century.

While Victory Mountain has been self-sustaining since the early 1980's, they have frequently been blessed with financial support from other Charis Fellowship churches and ministries. If you would like to know more about the project or contribute a financial gift to partner in this revitalization, visit: www.assistcx.org/dryhill



**GRACE CHURCH
BOWLING GREEN, OH**

Grace Church in Bowling Green, OH has been in transition for several years. In 2016 it was renamed Grace Church (from Bowling Green Grace Brethren Church) and now, in

2019, will continue its transformation through a revitalization project with Assist.

After suddenly losing their previous pastor, the leaders at Grace Church began looking for a new way forward for the future of the church and its remaining congregants. An agreement for partnership with Assist will involve a 3-year process of establishing a new vision and culture for the church to see a bright and fruitful future.

Assist is currently conducting a national search for the revitalization pastor who will lead this congregation forward.

OHIO



For more than 40 years, the Grace Brethren Church has served in Pataskala, a suburb on the east side of Columbus. Over those 40 years the community has grown exponentially, from only 3,000 people in the early 1990's to over 15,000 by 2018. And while the city and the church have undergone transition in the past, the church is now preparing to embark on its most significant to date.

Leaders of the Pataskala church attended the Assist Bootcamp training in November 2018 to begin exploring what might be necessary to ensure another 40 years of fruitful ministry. They returned to their congregation optimistic about the future and subsequently signed a revitalization partnership agreement with Assist.



**GRACE BRETHREN CHURCH
PATASKALA, OH**

Assist is currently conducting a national search to identify the pastoral candidate who will be called as the Revitalization Pastor for Pataskala Grace Brethren Church.



Brad Gromis is called as the Revitalization Pastor for Grace Church of Ephrata, PA

Brad Gromis was installed as the new pastor of Ephrata Grace Church in February 2019. Brad has been serving at the New Holland Grace Family Church and providing support to the Ephrata church during their time of leadership transition. Upon agreeing to a partnership with Assist for Revitalization, the search for a new pastor began. That search was short, as it became evident that Brad was the right man for the job.

Brad and his vision team from Ephrata attended their first Assist Bootcamp in March to begin developing their 3-year strategic plan for bringing a new vision and future for Grace Church Ephrata.



**GRACE CHURCH
EPHRATA, PA**

MEET OUR TEAM

staff



TED & ELISE ADOMANIS

Director of Finance
& Administration

MARK ARTRIP

Director of Recruitment
& Church Planting



BART BLAIR

Director of Communications
& Project Coach



PHILIP BRYANT

Director of Development
& Project Coach



project support



RON & CHERY BOEHM

Church Planter Assessments
& Project Coach


WADE RININGER

Project Coach



A S S I S T
CHURCH EXPANSION

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DONATIONS AND
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DOES YOUR CHURCH NEED HELP?

NATHAN BRYANT, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

At Assist, our vision is to help the Charis Fellowship become a movement across North America. In order to accomplish this mission, our work must emphasize new churches being started and also a commitment to restoring glory to the many historic legacy churches across our fellowship that have grown stagnant or are in decline. **If your church, or another with whom you are familiar, has reached a point in which a revitalization plan is worth exploring, it would be our pleasure to pay you a visit and discuss how a partnership with Assist might be able to help.** You can contact me directly via email at: nathan@assistcx.org

