

## Jim's Tool Box

### CAS Congregations Feature Innovative/New Ministries

For the last several months, I have been writing either about congregations in decline or how to transform existing congregations into effective mission centers (click [HERE](#) for the archive of past Tool Box articles). This month I want to focus on some of the good things that are taking place in congregations around the CAS District.

A couple of weeks ago, I emailed pastors in the district, and I asked them to share with me new initiatives, programs, or ministries that the congregations have begun in the last year. I was very pleased with the responses I received. I divided the responses into four categories:

- New classes or groups formed in local churches
- Ministries that focus more on the existing congregation
- Ministries that reach out to serve the community
- Ministries that represent growth or new worship services

Here are some examples in three of the categories. I have embedded a link to the email addresses for these pastors (where we have the email address) in case you would like to contact them for more information about the ministry or project described.

#### **New Classes or Groups Formed:**

- [Pastor Floyd Hubbell](#) at **South Bloomfield UMC** writes that the youth in the church have formed a singing choir, bell choir, and a praise dance team during the last year. He says that another Sunday School class for pre-teens is forming for the fall.
- At **Emmett Chapel** a youth worship event is held on the first and third Sunday evenings of the month. [Pastor Ron Dixon](#) says that the event starts with contemporary worship, videos, and a brief devotional from the youth leader. After a break, the participants divide up into age groups for bible study: 5-10 year olds, 10-18 year olds, and 18 years old and up.
- **The Jacksontown UMC** is forming a group in September of this year called "American Heritage Group." [Pastor Bob Beyer](#) reports that the group is similar to the Girl Scouts but is more biblically based. They have twenty girls ready to begin the group.

#### **Ministries that Focus on the Existing Congregation:**

A couple of pastors reported on ministries that are primarily aimed at those already in the congregation (however these would benefit others who come to the church, too).

- [Pastor Ken Brown](#) at **Christian Endeavor UMC** says that the congregation has changed some of their music that includes several members with special musical talent.
- At **Columbia Heights UMC**, [Pastor Ed Lewis](#) describes a new ministry that is a Valet Parking service for Sunday mornings and other large events. He writes, “We have a staff of volunteers who meet people at our north entrance, assist them with wheelchairs, walkers, etc., and escort them into the building where our greeters welcome them and continue any needed assistance.” Ed says that the rest of the valet parking system works just like the valet who parks your car at a restaurant. The valet parks the car, records the key position on a key board, and gives the person a corresponding key card. When worship or the event is over, the driver hands in the key card and the valet retrieves the car, assists the driver and passengers as needed. Ed says that the service has been well received. The key to the ministry is the dedicated group of volunteers who staff the ministry. The team received radical hospitality training.

### **Ministries that Reach Out to the Community:**

- [Pastor Jon Osmundson](#) writes that the mission team at **Salem-Kingston** wanted to help the food clearing house in Circleville. In the past the church had given a monetary donation. Last fall the church distributed paper grocery sacks to the people of the church and asked them to fill them with nonperishable items and return them to the church. The church provided over 50 sacks full and case loads of canned goods. All of this was estimated to be at least four times the normal monetary donation that the church had made to the food ministry in the past.
- [Pastor Patty Cook](#) at **Parkview UMC** described a process she called “The Inside-Out Church.” The church worked through a process to help them determine their vision:
  - One on one interviews with community leaders
  - Reading the church’s history and community’s history
  - Small group interviews with all members of the congregation in peoples’ homes
  - Recognition of a community outreach team to hold community members
  - Large community listening meetings at the church, inviting business and political leaders
  - Outreach team identifies areas where the church can facilitate a solution and become a community partner
  - Cast the vision – what would Jesus do? How is this doing justice?
- At **London First UMC** several new ministries have been launched including *Lift Up on High*. According to [Pastor Steve Rodgers](#) the ministry came into existence out of the need for affordable housing in Madison County. Visions of Hope was chartered by the congregation as a not for profit community development corporation to meet needs of Madison County by partnering with other churches and organizations. Visions of Hope was able to secure the use of four apartments in the center of town. These apartments provide housing for three

single mother families and a live-in caretaker. Along with housing and utilities, Lift Up on High provides mentoring, life skill training, and spiritual support to the guests, all designed to help the residents reach self-sufficiency. Steve shared that the ministry will celebrate its first year this summer. So far one of the mothers will be completely debt free within a matter of weeks, after a few months of no rent, while also receiving some financial management guidance. Another young mother of two is working toward a degree in nursing home care and is doing well. The third mom is enrolled at Clark State where she has consistently made the Dean's List and was recently inducted into the National Honor Society.

There is more to share. I received *many* more responses. I'll share more next month. If you still want to send me something that your church is working on, feel free to send it via email to [jwaugh@wocumc.org](mailto:jwaugh@wocumc.org).