

# METROGRACE

Developing Urban Churches

**April 2017**

*Jesus said, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few." (Luke 10:2)*



**Dr. Jim Brown**  
Executive Director

## New Church Plants and Pastoral Training

MetroGrace is focused on **gathering, training, sending** and coaching teams to develop gospel-centered, community-based congregations.

MetroGrace has been working for more than a year at **gathering** a team in Bridesburg. Our pioneering work in this challenging community continues to make progress. We've made a commitment to the neighborhood, buying a small building in a key location. We're meeting neighbors, inviting them for worship on Sunday evenings. About thirty people come each week. We've seen one conversion and baptism, so far. We're planning a neighborhood meeting to listen and learn from our neighbors. And we're hosting a primary election for The City of Philadelphia in May. Ask the Lord to solidify the core and its leaders.

We're **training** leaders through our Pastors' Institute. We're using seminary-level material provided by [biblicaltraining.org](http://biblicaltraining.org) to help young men acquire the solid foundation they need for church leadership. I'm pleased to be working with three men – Pete Forshtay, Mike Connor and Travis Swisher.



Pete is our Congregational Pastor in Wissinoming. Pete is a great student. He graduated from Philadelphia Biblical University with highest honors. And, he is licensed in the Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches. But, he's committed to lifelong learning and is a great encouragement to our cohort.

Mike is an elder at Crossroads. He was part of the original church planting team in Holmesburg. Mike graduated from Philadelphia Biblical University with a BS in Bible and a BS in Education. He holds a M.Ed. from Waldon University. Mike teaches math at Tacony Academy Charter School. He is serving as a Pastoral Intern at Crossroads, playing a key role in the development of our work in Bridesburg.



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**Dr. Jim Brown,**  
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Travis Swisher works full time with a local contractor while matriculating as a full time student at Community College of Philadelphia. He serves with the youth leadership team at Crossroads and helps lead worship. Even with all of that, he is working hard to learn God’s word and prepare for whatever God has next.

As we announced last month, we were glad to **send** Frank and Lisa Yost with a team of twenty people to the neighborhood of Rhawnhurst last month. It’s exciting and challenging to get a new work off the ground. Please pray for the Yosts and their team as they reach out to neighbors with the gospel.



Pete and Danielle Forshtay

### A Local Event Becomes National News

We live, and lead a congregation, in Wissinoming (neighborhood in Philly); so, naturally we are invested in our neighborhood’s well-being and image. As a church, Crossroads seeks civic improvement and positive change. The recent vandalism at Mount Carmel Cemetery in Wissinoming called for our response.

Mt. Carmel, a Jewish cemetery in Wissinoming, is one of four cemeteries that share the same intersection at Frankford and Cheltenham Avenues. The cemetery fell victim to vandals—over 100 grave stones apparently tipped over. Immediately the area surrounding the cemetery was swarmed by reporters, both local and national. It was being called a hate crime and antisemitism - fitting to the national commentary; and, there were reports that

it was over 500 stones toppled, leaving out that about 350 of those were toppled at least a decade ago. The coverage gave opportunity for politicians and other opportunistic people to hold a rally downtown called, “Stand Against Hate,” despite police reminding people that they neither know who did it, nor their motive, as this was the only cemetery of the four to have been neglected for a long time. Suddenly, Wissinoming's name was nationally known and immediately tarnished.

Our involvement in the Wissinoming Civic Association led to our being invited to collaborate on an event as a follow-up to the negativity spread through the news. We urged that the event be given a positive name and purpose: Wissinoming Walk for Peace: Keeping Unity in our Community. The structure of the event was simple. The news media was invited to witness the community gather and walk around Wissinoming Park, located next door to Mount Carmel Cemetery, with candles in hand, praying for our neighborhood and hearing from a local rabbi who shared with those attending that we were praying with our feet and are a light in our community.

This media-viewed gathering stood in the face of all other gatherings in that it had a positive and unifying theme; a theme largely influenced by Crossroads Community Church. A Christian’s involvement in civic life can be positive and can make all the difference in the world—a difference that gives God the glory!

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