

# METROGRACE

Developing Urban Churches

**January 2016**

*Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. "Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest." Matthew 9:37-38*



**Dr. Jim Brown**  
Executive Director

## A Story of Grace in our Holmesburg Neighborhood

Life Groups help believers at Crossroads Community Church in Philadelphia grow as they learn to apply God's word to everyday circumstances. Last month as I sat in a group of about ten people I was grateful to listen to the ways God has been working.

We asked friends to share how they had come to know Jesus as their Savior.

Of course it's always a little slow getting that first response. So, my wife Lisa shared her conversion through a Sunday School teacher when she was a little girl. She confirmed her decision with her Christian mother that night. And, she has enjoyed a fulfilling relationship with the Lord that has brought great benefit to our family.

One woman shared that she was in a recovery house after a lifetime of drug addiction. A woman from Crossroads came and shared the gospel with her. But, she wasn't ready to trust Christ, yet. Subsequently, she went to prison. While there, she saw a production of The Passion Play and everything came together. She began her life with Christ behind bars.

Another friend related her story of coming to know Jesus as her Savior when she was twelve years old. Her girlfriend had shared the gospel and she placed her faith in Christ. But the teenage years led her into bad relationships which resulted in a lifetime of pain. After years, she found herself in a shelter for battered women. During this deep valley she began to see the need for change. The Lord has been rebuilding her life one step at a time. Now she prays for her children and grandchildren, bringing them to church whenever she can.

One man drove an hour from the suburbs to attend this little group in the inner city. He shared the devastating impact of addiction in his life. Though clean for four years now, he had been using hard drugs since 1979. Failed relationships, several prison terms and destructive behaviors are behind him now. Since he found Christ, he's been reading his Bible from Genesis to Revelation and then starting over. He's on his fourth time through the Book.

As the sharing continued, we heard from a woman who was attending for the very first time. She said that she didn't really want to come that night. Someone had called to remind her but she was feeling lazy and didn't want to go out. To paraphrase she said, "But, I'm glad I did! I've been in jail, too. That's not something you can share in most churches. But hearing how God has worked in the lives of others gives me hope in raising my daughter."

And there were more stories.



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**Dr. Jim Brown,**  
**Executive Director**

When we got home, my wife, Lisa said how grateful she was that the Lord had spared us from so much pain. It's not that our life has been without trial; but we have been very blessed. She said that sometimes she feels so inadequate for the ministry God has given us. Me too! But, many years ago a ministry mentor shared a verse that I embrace time-after-time. "Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as *coming* from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God," 2 Corinthians 3:5

Maybe you feel inadequate to serve the Lord in the city. Join the club! Our only adequacy comes from God. He can use you to transform lives. You don't need a "story" to serve in the city. I can tell you that the Lord is working through a woman who was saved as a little girl in Sunday School to bless many who have faced great difficulty.



Pastor Pete Forshtay

### A Story of Grace in our Wissinoming Neighborhood

During the Christmas season, it is easy to see the best in people come out. This was true for those in positions of leadership in my neighborhood.

Recently, our Wissinoming Civic Association was refounded by a few businessmen who continue to keep their businesses in our humble neighborhood. Having recently become a member of the civic association, and only speaking up a handful of times with other neighborhood pastors about upcoming events targeted at the community; I, along with the other pastors, were asked if we could plan a faith element to be presented at the civic association's 2nd Annual Tree Lighting Ceremony. I was greatly encouraged to hear that anything spiritual was on the hearts of these leaders and that they would want it included in a community event they were planning.

Using social media, the other neighborhood pastors and I talked about what we might say and do. It was decided that we would simply share from our hearts about Jesus. I decided to use the Christmas tree as an illustration, pointing out that it was an evergreen and saying it ought to serve as a reminder of the promise of everlasting life that God promises to all who will repent and trust in Jesus, the free gift God gives us all.

The previous year's tree lighting was attended by about 30 people, of whom my wife and I knew few. This year, we knew considerably more of the now over 200 people who were in attendance. So, during an otherwise secular tree lighting event, I was allowed, along with four other neighborhood pastors, to share the gospel with friends, neighbors and strangers before the Christmas tree was illuminated.

Praise God for this great opportunity and for so many people hearing the gospel this past Christmas, neighbors who may or may not wander into one of our churches this new year. Pray that the Lord would continue His work in their hearts; and, that perhaps He will draw many of them to Himself.

**We wish you a Happy New Year!**



Mke, Margarete, Jim, Lisa, Dae, Pete, Anecia, Kurt

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