

METROGRACE

Developing Urban Churches

May 2018

MetroGrace connects **supporting, serving** and **stationed** partners to develop gospel-centered, community-based churches in urban neighborhoods.

But Jesus said, "Let the children alone, and do not hinder them from coming to Me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." Matthew 19:14

Some pursue the proud and powerful but Jesus welcomed the lowly and weak. Many in Philadelphia are in that category. The Pew Charitable Trust reports: Poverty is one of Philadelphia's most enduring problems. At 25.7 percent, the poverty rate is the highest among the nation's 10 largest cities. About 400,000 residents—including roughly 37 percent of the city's children under the age of 18—live below the federal poverty line, which is \$19,337 in annual income for an adult living with two children. And nearly half of all poor residents are in deep poverty, defined as 50 percent below the federal poverty line. <http://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/reports/2017/11/philadelphias-poor>

MetroGrace is developing gospel-centered, community-based churches in neighborhoods throughout Philadelphia. Transformed communities require personal conversions that reshape families. So, our churches recognize the importance of reaching children and their families.



Kingdom Kids is a weekly ministry for children age 3 through grade 4 that is held simultaneously with congregational worship.



Committed teachers provide a safe, caring environment where children learn God's word. Some parents, grandparents or caretakers take that opportunity to praise the Lord, hear God's word and build friendships that foster growth. We're seeing restoration in some families because children bring their parents to church!

Thrive, our ministry for students in grade 5 and up, meets each Wednesday night. We've seen solid growth in this group, especially among young teens. Please pray for strength as they encounter big challenges in a difficult setting.

Camp Conquest provides a great opportunity to help students from the city spend a week in the country and see God's Word lived out. We'd like to be able to help students attend

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*Thank you for supporting MetroGrace this month!
Please include this cut-off with your next gift and
use the back to indicate any changes to your
contact information.*

Name: _____

Enclosed is my gift to support:

Jim and Lisa Brown \$ _____

General Fund \$ _____

Other \$ _____

7721 Torresdale Avenue

Philadelphia, PA 19136

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www.metrograce.org

Dr. Jim Brown,

Executive Director

camp this year. **We anticipate a total cost of about \$2,000. Could the Lord use you to help send a child to camp this year? Please mark your gift to MetroGrace as "Camp."**



There is a lot of good happening in Wissinoming!

An older adult center is opening soon and holding a job fair. A meat processing plant is expanding; they've hired about 500 new workers. A charter school moved in and accepted children from our neighborhood first. A new shopping center is in the works; a gym, salon, cell phone and grocery store have already opened. There are new businesses along the main drag and the civic association is growing in number and prominence! One would think everything is better and there's no room for worry or complaints.

But something else is happening. Folks have noticed a rise in petty crime, robberies, drug deals, theft, vandalism and the like. As a result, some of our neighbors forget about the improvements and become focused on the bad. They get discouraged and join the chorus of others who say, "As soon as I get the money, I'm moving out of here! This is no place to raise a family!"

Now, some of this I understand. Sometimes it takes the police 45 minutes to respond to a call; there aren't enough officers to rapidly respond to every incident. That leads the same people to complain, "The police don't care, and they never come."

I asked a few neighborhood pastors to meet and discuss how the Church should respond. Our best answer was prayer! So, we set aside Sunday, April 15th at 6:00 pm, to call upon the Lord for help and hope. We invited our congregates and community to gather. We called this event, "Wissinoming Praying." We wanted to communicate that even if people have given up on calling the police, they can still call Jesus!

We met at one of the busier intersections, Torresdale Avenue and Benner Street. Robberies, drug deals, prostitution and shootings have taken place there, a perfect spot for public prayer! We shared the event on social media and at our civic association meeting. Many were excited and said they'd come. Then on Sunday, the warm weather left us, it dropped to 40 degrees and it began to rain hard. About fifteen of us braved the elements, and despite the rain, we prayed until 7:00 pm. During that hour, we were joined by one or two folks passing by. One woman, deciding to pray out loud with us, paused for a second to shout to her friend across the street, "NOT NOW! I'M PRAYING FOR MY NEIGHBORHOOD!" That was my favorite moment! Others committed themselves to remain in the neighborhood and serve the Lord. It was an encouraging time!



We hope to continue gathering neighbors in Wissinoming for prayer. We want the Church to have an active presence in the darker corners of our community, to be the light of Jesus Christ. So we'll be trying this again in June! Pray for us; and hey, join us!

I would like to add or change my address, phone number or email address: