



MIDDLETOWN NOW!

CALLING DISCIPLES TO BE THE KINGDOM NOW!

September-October 2010

Seinfeld & Plotless Living



David Emery, Senior Minister
Middletown Christian Church

A study was done, not too long ago, to figure out why the TV show *Seinfeld* was so successful. They wanted to know why the sitcom was so phenomenally successful among the American television-watching audience.

So, a university commissioned a study to analyze *Seinfeld* and to ascertain why – during its run – it was so popular. They found out that *Seinfeld* was a plotless show. It sort of meandered from situation to situation without a connection. It just kind of ran plotlessly from circumstance to circumstance. And the research found that the reason *Seinfeld* was so successful was because plotless people love plotless programming. That it was, in fact, at the top of the ratings because many of the people watching it were as empty and directionless as the program and its characters were. In other words, they did not have an overall sense of direction for their lives.

Of course, this is not true for everyone who enjoyed *Seinfeld*; but, who could argue with the idea that we are living in a time of plotless living. Many people are living their lives without a greater sense of purpose. It reminds me of the person who said, “I was dying to finish high school so that I could go to college. Then, I was dying to finish college so that I could get a job. Then, I was dying to get married; then dying to start a family. Then I was dying for those kids to grow up and get out. Then I was dying to retire. And now I’m just dying, and I’ve never gotten around to living.” If that is not plotless living, then I don’t know what else could be.

This newsletter is about a different sort of people. It’s about ordinary people who have found a purpose for living, who have a God-inspired plot line for their lives. You will read stories about how God used a little girl to change a man’s life, a woman who accepted a call to be the principal at a failing middle school, and a team of people who are organizing to share God’s love with an apartment community.

But how do we discover our purpose? Plotless living becomes purposeful living when we join the work God is doing in the world. What is God doing? God is saving, rescuing, blessing, providing, correcting, forgiving, feeding, enlightening, and God is doing it now.

Coffeehouse

Conversations...



Sharing Questions of
Life & Faith

The very best messages from the pulpit leave you thinking all week, right? Asking yourself questions, wondering about the issues the sermon raised in your mind and heart. Why, then, do we keep these questions to ourselves? **Coffeehouse Conversations**, our fall sermon series, addresses questions of life and faith that have been chosen to provoke you to think and ask questions, by yourself and with others.

Sept. 11/12 How can a good God allow suffering?

Sept. 18/19 Why follow Jesus when there are so many paths?

Sept. 25/26 Does science eliminate the need for God?

Oct. 2/3 If I believe in God why is it necessary to go to church?

Oct. 9/10 How can I trust the Bible? It’s 2000 years old!

These questions are best asked and answered in conversation, whether it is between you and friends, or between you and God. So come and hear the message, then gather with a group to share a good cup of coffee and some great conversation about that week’s hot topic: suffering, religion, science, church, and the Bible. Get to know yourself, get to know others and get to know God. Have a conversation.

What a joy it is to wake up each day knowing that God is calling us to play a role in a drama that is unfolding before our eyes.

Bottom line, life is too short to meander through it from one episode to the next. Should it surprise us then that the characters on *Seinfeld* are, for the most part, self-absorbed and uncaring people?

This article was inspired by a sermon preached by Pastor William Robinson of Second Mt. Vernon Baptist Church, Atlanta, GA.

If you would like to receive David’s weekly e-mails, contact the church office, 245-9793 or mcc500@middletownchristian.org.

“New Life Woodside”

We’ve become dangerous to loneliness, heartache and suffering when we realize that the church is not a place that we *go*, but that we *are* the church, *wherever* we are.

“New Life Woodside” is an example of how that truth is being lived out among us. A team has been formed to reach out and build relationships with the residents of a local apartment community where several single mothers with small children live. It all began with VBS

when several of the residents responded to our invitation to attend. What we found is a great hunger for Christian community and the study of God’s word.

MCC hosted a cookout for the residents and their children on September 1. A Bible study and children’s activities are being planned. We’re going to learn a lot from those experiences about what it means to reach out instead of waiting for people to come to us.

One Woman’s Hopes for Woodside Village & Berrytown

The book, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, written by Robert E. Coleman, presents a thorough examination of the Gospel accounts, revealing the objective of Christ’s ministry and His strategy for carrying it out. The book focuses on the underlying principles that consistently determined what Christ’s action would be in any given situation. By emulating Jesus’ pattern, we prepare to minister to the specific needs of those God puts into our lives.

World evangelism, all started by Jesus praying and then calling a few people to follow Him, (the types of people that others would follow) ... Luke 6:12-13.

Ms. Brenda Esther Johnston, a new member of MCC is this type of person. A loving mother of two daughters, Candida and Daniela, Brenda was one of the first members of the Woodside team. I interviewed Brenda about her faith walk.



Brenda Johnston

Fred: How did you come to know about MCC?

Brenda: I first learned of MCC having attended a diabetic seminar here sponsored by the

County Health Department. The church was the right size, and upon my visit, not knowing anyone, I found the congregation to be very friendly as they welcomed me for the first time.

Fred: When did you come to know Christ?

Brenda: I was raised by my parents in a Spanish Catholic church, but something was missing. So, I went seeking 23 years ago. Unbeknownst to me, God desired a close, loving, intimate relationship and at that time, I surrendered my life to the Lord.

Fred: What has your life been like after this conversion experience?

Who can you reach out to—right now?

Brenda: It’s really changed. Fear and anxiety have been replaced with quiet assurance, joy and peace. I have learned to place my problems in the Lord’s hands, and I’ve learned to thank Him each day for the many blessings that He provides and allows me to enjoy!

Fred: What are some of your gifts and talents?

Brenda: I have served in several capacities: food preparation, organizing church trips, outreach, and visitation of the sick and in nursing homes.

Fred: As part of “New Life Woodside”, what results would you like to see?

Brenda: I long to see the positive effect the children will receive as they come into contact with the word of God; the molding and shaping of these children’s lives as a result of healthy, Christian role-models.

Fred: As you look to the future, what effect do you think the six-week Bible classes will have on the Woodside and Berrytown communities?

Brenda: I believe that the people involved in these studies will gain a deeper sense of Godly faith, along with a higher self-respect and humble self-esteem. Maybe crime and violence will be curbed and maybe the residents will gain a sense of respect and ownership for these communities which could create a chain reaction, producing a better, “new life” for all involved.

Fred: What future ministries would you like to see begun at MCC?

Brenda: I would like to be a part of a Spanish-speaking Bible class and serve as part of an outreach ministry for adults in this community.

Fred: Thanks to Brenda and others like her. We look forward to the future of this ministry and the vision of Jesus’ unfailing plan - growing the Kingdom of God, one soul at a time.



Fred Johnson



Ministry, Marriage and a Little Girl's Invitation

On Easter Sunday 2005, Jay Cash came to worship at Middletown Christian Church for the first time. Jay had not been looking for a church home, but came to worship at MCC thanks to the innocent invitation of a five-year-old girl.

Jay recalls that the Spring of 2005 was a very dark time in his life. Yet he had no church home and had no relationship with Christ to help him through his difficulty. One day during this period, he opened his front door and saw Eliza Moffett, her brother Nick, and their mother Christi standing on his porch with postcard in hand, extending an invitation to worship at MCC. As Jay says, "How do you refuse the invitation of a five-year-old girl?"

Jay's visit to Middletown Christian on that Easter Sunday was not his last. Jay returned to worship regularly and eventually made MCC his church home. For over two years Jay attended worship services and got to know other people who attended, but he never became part of a small group.



Jane & Jay Cash - Newlyweds and MCC Members

In 2009, one of Jay's friends from outside of the church, Jane Reid, asked Jay if she could come to church with him. Jay explained that he would love for her to accompany him as long as she understood that he was a devout "front-bencher." Despite hesitation at sitting so close to the senior minister, Jane agreed to join Jay for worship at MCC. As Jay describes it, this was a watershed moment in his relationship with Jane, a relationship that would lead to their marriage in July 2010.

In the autumn of the previous year, Jay and Jane were invited to form a new KingdomGroup that would meet on Tuesday evenings. Unlike many small groups at MCC, Jane and Jay's small group would be composed of eight to ten people who were complete strangers. As Jay described it, the only connection among these

group members was having a past experience when each felt separated from God, isolated from Christ, and disconnected from a church home. The group was centered on a weekly sermon-based Bible study, in which the members discussed in greater depth the sermon that had been offered the previous week.

As expected, by studying the Bible each week, each member of the group experienced an enhanced relationship with God. In addition, over a short period of time, the group members deepened their relationships with each other.

In addition to gathering on a weekly basis to study the Bible together, group members began to rely on each other for support. Whether it was stress related to job loss, a problem with a family member, or just the common stresses of everyday life that required the support of others, the group members found a comforting environment in which the pressures of the world could be relieved.

The intentional effort to develop relationships did not stay within the confines of their group. They also reached out to those outside of the church walls who needed to know God's love. In December, Jane and Jay's small group provided Christmas presents to a single mother of five children, who due to dire financial straits felt separated from and unloved by God. This outreach effort helped Jay to remember the time in his life when he felt disconnected from God, and how a little girl's simple invitation brought him back to God. It reinforced to him the importance of Kingdom people intentionally reaching out to those who need us to be the conduit of God's loving touch.

The story of Jane and Jay Cash is a story about invitation and relationship that tells us something about what it means to be Kingdom Now disciples. Just as God invites us to deepen our relationship with Him, we are also called to be Kingdom people by deepening our relationships with other people. These relationships include not only relationships with others in the church but also with complete strangers who need to experience God's unconditional love.

By John Whittle, Small Groups Team

Who can you invite to church—right now?

To watch the full interview of Jane and Jay with John Whittle, please visit www.middletownchristian.org/meetgroups.

Relationships Over Attractions

A subtle change is taking place at The Valley. It took some time to notice but the way people are coming to The Valley is changing.

When this ministry was birthed in March 2009 a large percentage of our visitors came through advertising and attractional events; events like Trunk or Treat, Easter Egg Hunt, and VBS. Now more people come to our Valley Station campus through invitations extended through relationships that people are building. People are inviting neighbors, co-workers, and family members who never attended (or seldom attended) church.

One new member of The Valley encouraged her boyfriend to come on the promise the pastor would be wearing a flowered shirt. We have seen people following through on “You and Who Sundays” and invite people to come to church - and those visitors are staying.

We are building a culture at The Valley that places a high value on relational evangelism. As people become active in our ministry it means they are beginning or deepening their relationship with God. Quite often people who are actively growing in faith are the ones most open to sharing their faith with others. As one woman told me, “I’ve changed since I’ve been here and I want other people to know the reason for that change is Jesus.” She is now intentional in her efforts to share her experiences.

Relational evangelism begins with the movement of the Holy Spirit in the hearts and minds of God’s people. If the Spirit prompts you, speak up. The person you’re with may need a friend, they may need someone to listen, or they may need someone to guide them to a relationship with Jesus Christ. As Bill Hybels says it all starts with an intention to “walk across the room” to meet someone new and say “hello.”

Relationships matter. People will respond favorably to an invitation when the invitation is built on what they see as your genuine interest in their lives. At the Valley, we are living out the way Christ told the disciples to build the early church, by going into the

community and building relationships and sharing. A new member of The Valley told me recently, “I just can’t tell enough people about my experience with God through this church. My problems are still there, but I know they will not beat me.”

Sanders Elementary

Community involvement is one way the church lives out its relationships in the lives of people. Ministry is about going to the people and not sitting back waiting for the people to come to you. The Valley is making a commitment to support a community project at Sanders Elementary School on Terry Rd. The school of 540 students is in the process of building a large recreational area for its students and the surrounding community. The area surrounding the school is comprised of single family homes and apartments but lacks a safe place for children and adults to enjoy outdoor activities. In addition to making a contribution to the project The Valley will also be taking part in a fund-raising walk-a-thon this fall. Principal Pamela Cooper says, “Not only are we striving to become “proficient” learners; we are building strong healthy bodies.”

Hispanic Ministry at The Valley

Did you know there are no Hispanic Disciples of Christ churches in Kentucky? It’s true. A small Hispanic mission exists in Lexington, but little else. That may change as the prayers of some very committed followers of Jesus at The Valley are becoming reality. God spoke to Jose Torres, an elder apprentice at The Valley, and gave him a vision for a Hispanic ministry. A great deal of prayer and planning has gone into the project that came to life in mid-August with an opening Bible study. This small group of Latinos/Latinas meets each Saturday evening at 6:00 p.m. to study Scriptures, sing praises to God, and worship God in their native language and culture. Please pray for this group as they reach into our community with the Good News and build relationships. For more information on Estudio Biblico Hispano contact Jose at 502.548.6760 or 502.539.3007.

Who can you bless in our church, community, state, country or world—right now?

... meet someone new and say “hello.” That’s how a relationship begins and it could change a person’s life forever.



Ed Huckleberry
Campus Minister, The Valley



Youth Stories

Matt Eversole is the son of Jack and Karen Eversole. He is a 16-year-old student at Eastern High School, and he is a member of MCC. Matt has been an active member of the MCC youth group for several years now, attending regular youth activities and participating on several youth trips.

However, he was not always so involved. It wasn't until Matt's eighth-grade year that a friend invited him to go on one of the annual youth mission trips. "After that, I was hooked," says Matt. "I wasn't really involved until that trip, but I made a lot of friends and had a lot of fun on the trip, so I started coming to youth group after that, and here I am."

Recently, Matt decided to use his own experience to reach out to others who may not be connected to the youth program. "I figured there may be more people like me who just need to be invited to the youth trip or the choir tour and find out how much fun youth can be. They may just not know how much fun it is!"



Matt Eversole, MCC Youth

Matt is taking the initiative in a project designed to reach out to his peers. He is gathering both current and past youth group members to tell stories about how being involved in the youth program makes a difference in their lives.

Knowing that it takes just one invitation to an event to get people connected, Matt hopes to find stories similar to his own. He then wants to use those stories as an invitational tool.

"I want to gather stories like mine, of people who felt uninvolved or disconnected, but who were invited to go on a trip... we could gather up these stories and put them on a DVD or YouTube. We could send out those DVDs to our friends who don't have a church, or to our friends who have stopped coming to youth group, and maybe they'll start coming."

I know Matt's idea will turn out to be a great tool for inviting others to join in what God is doing through the youth program.

The spirit and goal of Matt's project is exactly in line with the focus and goal of the youth program - invite,

YOUTH PROGRAMMING KICKS OFF SEPTEMBER 12

Calling all youth (Grades 6-12) ... Mark your calendars now and plan on joining us for our fall programming! Come and see how YOU can plug in to ministry at Middletown Christian Church!

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| 3:15-4:00 p.m. | Genesis (Middle School) Choir |
| 4:00-4:45 p.m. | Revelations (High School) Choir
Genesis (Middle School) Bells |
| 4:45-5:30 p.m. | Revelations (High School) Bells
Youth Drama |
| 5:30-6:00 p.m. | Snack Supper |
| 6:00-7:30 p.m. | Middle School and High School Programming |

welcome, connect, grow. We want to be an invitational community who welcomes others and helps them connect to a sense of belonging, as well as a deep connection to God. This year, we are going to be encouraging youth to be "missional" agents in their schools, their sports teams, and their social activities. This means that youth will be encouraged to reach out to new friends, as well as friends who have stopped attending youth group for whatever reason. We will encourage the youth to take a leadership role in creating an invitational community. Youth teams will be created specifically for the purposes of calling on those who are absent, keeping up with current youth group members who have care concerns, and reaching out to youth who are disconnected from the youth program. The goal of these teams is simple - help people realize they belong here.

Though these teams will take time to form and develop into their full potential, I truly believe the opportunities created in these teams will create ownership in the youth program. Once that happens, there is no end to the possibilities of what this community of youth can do.

Who can you share your story with—right now?



Adam Kilchenman
Youth Minister

A Dangerous Prayer and a Call to Serve



Jennifer and Steven Wilt, members of MCC since 2009

Jennifer Wilt was surprised by the phone call she received one day this summer. She had been praying for guidance about God's will for her and where she could be of greatest service.

Some would say that's a dangerous prayer. "I definitely think this is a calling, and not something I chose," said Wilt.

The head of Jefferson County's Administrator Recruitment and Development phoned Wilt to ask her to take on the position of principal at Frost Middle School, one of the 10 schools in Kentucky identified as persistently low-achieving by the state Department of Education. The school needed a leader who could turn it around as quickly as possible. Wilt, who had been a teacher and most recently an administrator at the Department of Education, had never been a principal.

"I don't know if I can do it," Wilt said of the thoughts running through her head. She felt fear and doubt. She also felt inspired by the challenge laid before her.

"This was something that wouldn't let me go," Wilt said. "I kept trying to talk myself out of it ... I prayed about it. I asked everyone I knew to pray about it."

Some folks were skeptical. "I had so many people who said to me, 'Oh, you don't want to be there, it can't be done,'" Wilt said. Then she consulted a trusted,

spiritually grounded friend. "What he said to me was 'God does not call the equipped, he equips the called.'" Wilt trusted her spiritual intuition and held tight to her faith, and she accepted the job.

"For me it's all about the students," Wilt said. "When I realized there were people who said these kids couldn't be successful and were willing to write them off, I knew I had to act. "Every day I walk in and think, 'this is where I'm supposed to be, it's where I was called.'"

There was a bit of serendipity in Wilt's calling. On her desk sits a picture of her when she was about 2 years old wearing a Frost Middle School T-shirt. Her father had been a counselor and assistant principal at the school decades before. Wilt said, "I spent time in these halls when I came to work with Dad in the summer." Who knew God was preparing her even then?

The task at Frost is monumental. At least 26 of the teachers this fall are new to the school, and 15 of those are first-time teachers. A majority of the 470 students have received underperforming scores on standardized tests. Wilt has her work cut out for her.

Like all people who transform their prayers into action, Wilt has moments of reservation.

"I don't feel courageous a lot of days," said Wilt, who describes herself as a planner who likes a sense of control. "My courage comes from being willing to turn it over, a lot of prayer all the time, and my belief that this is where I was sent. And God wouldn't send me to a place where he wouldn't take care of me."

By Rachel Reynolds, Feature Writer

MCC - Living Out Our ChIP Initiative

God is at work all around us...in our homes, in our schools, and in our neighborhoods! The new school year signaled the return of schedules, structure, and homework for many of us, and a new flurry of energy around our ChIP Initiative!

As a congregation, you've heard the challenge, and you've responded! What started as a targeted aim toward education as a means to reduce the impact of poverty on the lives of children has taken the shape of:

- ◆ Over 1,000 backpacks distributed through local schools and in the community so children had supplies needed to start the year
- ◆ Small groups shopping for school uniforms, painting a local teacher's lounge, and collecting breakfast bars for early-morning school programs
- ◆ Relational connections forming between children and adults, with countless hours poured into

How can you break the cycle of poverty and impact the life of a child—right now?

mentoring programs like Every 1 Reads and tutoring assistance at TLC at the Valley

- ◆ 153 children receiving weekend meals for the entire school year through *Blessings in a Backpack*

And I believe that's only the beginning. The spirit of God is still stirring, and I'm excited to see where that takes us! What plans might God have for this congregation? How will God continue to use us to bless this community and share in the work already being done in the world? I can't wait to find out!

To explore ways that you can serve children in our local schools and community, contact Jason Vander Pol at jamvp@insightbb.com or 445-7704.



*Dolly Mills
Serve Minister*



KingdomConnect

New to MCC? Join us to explore what it means to be a Kingdom Now church and engage in the work of the Kingdom! Join us for an upcoming session.

MIDDLETOWN CAMPUS:

Sunday, September 19 @ 6 pm

VALLEY CAMPUS:

Sunday, September 19 @ 9:15 am

Meet our ministry staff and learn more about our congregation's Kingdom Now vision and values.

Find a small group, engage in ministry, and bring your questions. It's the way to get connected!

RSVP at Connection Point - Childcare is available

LOOKING TO SERVE NOT SURE WHERE TO BEGIN ...

Complete a purple "Got Purpose Card" (available at Connection Point) and our Discovery Team will contact you!

got purpose?

Use your gifts to bless others and find a place where you can serve! Choose from one of the following workshop dates:

Sunday, October 10, 5:30 to 7:00

or

Wednesday, October 13, 6:00 to 7:30

To register, please contact Linda Smith,
lindabishopsmith@hotmail.com
or 345-2888

Generosity Matters ...

Because of the generosity of our church family, God's vision is becoming a reality. Thank you for your continued support of God's work here at Middletown Christian Church and The Valley.

General Fund Update

January—August 2010

Middletown Campus

Actual

January - June	\$ 826,764
July	117,920
August	<u>137,269</u>
Tithes & Offerings	\$ 1,081,953

Budgeted

\$ 1,129,756

Over (Under)

\$ (47,803)

Valley Campus

Actual

January - June	\$ 42,447
July	6,460
August	<u>6,898</u>
Tithes & Offerings	\$ 55,805

Budgeted

\$ 55,397

Over (Under)

\$ 408

Information as of this printing, 8/31/2010

Leave a lasting legacy; remember your church in your estate planning.

Welcome New Members!

Middletown Campus

Ashley Bermudez
Delvis Bermudez
Lorgia Bermudez
Stephen Bermudez
Bill Bivens
Kim Bivens
Joyce Boykin

Cathy Cambron
Bill Elder
Barb Fincher
Bob Fincher
Carolyn Hudson
Ken Hudson
Barbara Jacob
Craig Jennings
Brenda Johnston

Annie Kelley
Debbie Perdue
Donnie Ramsey
The Valley Campus
Christy Norris

Are You Regular?

Giving regularly to support God's work is an important part of our discipleship journey. Regular giving instills the habit of generosity into our lives; and the more generous we are on a regular basis, the more we become like Christ—who was generous in all things.

Regular giving is important to the ongoing ministries that happen every week at MCC. Our gifts provide the resources for children's Sunday School and worship as well as youth activities like the Youth Mission Trip and Youth Welcome Week. Our gifts enable us to open our facilities to local support groups and public schools, as well as small groups and relationship ministries, including divorce recovery and grief workshops. Our gifts enable us to offer assistance to those in need in the community and around the world as well as share God's love through inspiring worship. Regular giving helps the church remain faithful on its communal journey of discipleship.

Regardless of where you are in your faith journey, regular giving is an important part of maturing as Christ's disciples. Make a commitment to practice regular giving. The amount isn't as important as the commitment. Start with what you can, make it a regular habit, and watch generosity grow in your life.

P.S. Aren't you glad this article was about giving?

Children's Fall Programming Resumes Sun., September 12

Hey kids, Kindergarten through Grade 5, be here on Sunday, September 12 and help us kick off another great year of ministry at Middletown Christian Church!

Kindergarten-2nd Grade

4:45-5:30 p.m. BibleMax
5:30-6:15 p.m. Rock Choir

3rd-5th Grade

4:00-4:45 p.m. BibleMax
4:45-5:30 p.m. Rock Choir

4th/5th Grade JYF

5:30-6:00 p.m. Snack Supper w/Youth
6:00-7:30 p.m. Group Programming

Bible MAX (2nd-5th Grade)

Weekly scripture reading and lessons will not only teach Bible stories but will give the kids a real understanding of the Bible itself! It's fun and a great way for them to spend time with friends.

Junior Youth Fellowship (JYF)

For our 4th and 5th graders, JYF is designed to connect kids to God and each other. Building relationships is what we're all about.

For more information on these groups or other children's programming, visit www.middletownchristian.org/children or contact Laura Mauzy or Jackie Wilham at 245-9793.



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