

## Journey of Faith: Becoming The Change We Wish to See

# Putting the Community Back in Community Church

“Ever since I came here I have had a sense of God laying on my heart that ministry here in North Long Beach was missional,” says Chris Logan, pastor of Community Presbyterian Church in Long Beach. “You don’t have to go to Mexico or Vietnam or Africa to do missions—which is true of many neighborhoods in our presbytery—you can come here to us!”

What Logan and Community Presbyterian Church came to realize was that if they were going to be a community church then they were going to need to start ministering to their community. “Our goal,” continues Logan, “has been to ask how we can best serve our community, and we are just getting to the tip of the iceberg.” When you serve in your community, he explains, “you are impacting the people right around you rather than picking and choosing those to whom you will minister.”

One of the most exciting ways Community Presbyterian Church does just that is through computer classes for the community. “We took a storage room that was basically just full of leftover junk and we cleaned it out to make a computer lab with 12 computers,” recounts Logan. This theme of making use of what seemed forgotten is a recurring one with him and with the church.

They are not a wealthy church, but Logan is convinced that if it is God’s plan it will happen and if not, that’s okay—it is God who will open or close the door. The door seems to have



*The goal of the computer classes is to provide skills to people in the community so that they will be able to get better jobs and by getting better jobs might be more self-sustaining.*

opened for the computer classes, with computers, desks, chairs, carpet and paint all being donated, in addition to the teachers who donate their time. “One of our teachers is not a

member of our church but heard what we are doing and said, I want to be a part of that!” shares Logan.

Classes run 8 weeks and participants are charged \$20. Commenting on the nature of computers as ministry Logan reflects that “we are at a place in life where people need to connect with a church in an outside way before they seek a church for their spiritual needs—and isn’t that what Jesus would do?” Community Presbyterian hopes that, by helping to take care of a perceived need in the people they serve, they might at the same time warm them up to their true need.

But that old storage room has not been the only redeemed space at Community Presbyterian Church. “It used to be that our chapel building was only used for the six weeks of Lent,” continued Logan, “but other than that it never got used.” But then one day they happened upon an old sign, stored away in the church, that said “Chapel Open for Prayer.” Talk about a sign from God! “So we opened the chapel,” said Logan, “and now people come and pray.” There are very few churches that are open to the community. But because of the prominent sign out front, people know that this is one place they can come in and pray.

There’s a third piece to this transformation journey. “One day I was sitting in my office and I looked up on my bookshelf,” Logan recounts, “and realized how many extra Bibles I had, and how many Christian books that I didn’t really need and wasn’t really using.” So, instead of letting them gather dust there on the shelf, he picked them up, took them to the chapel, and placed them on a table with a sign that said ‘free.’

“Now we have New Testaments, Bibles—both English and Spanish—and they are all free,” says Logan. Because Community Presbyterian can’t afford to keep replacing the Bibles, Good Shepherd has partnered with them to donate Bibles. In addition to the spiritual nourishment, the church has also arranged with a local bakery to provide free bread in the chapel as well.

But Community Presbyterian Church’s vision is not just waiting

for people to come to them. “We’ve started doing what I am calling mission field trips,” said Logan. These field trips are once a month with the intent to go out into the community to serve. These field trips have included working at the Long



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Beach rescue mission and a local nursing home. The most recent venture included 12 adults and 16 youth who spent an evening cooking a meal for a house that helps unwed mothers, giving the women the night off.

“For us this is kind of new and it is exciting to see people get excited about serving others,” shared Logan. “We need to look at our presbytery as a mission field,” Logan suggests, “because I really think there are great opportunities to partner with other churches.”

For those wondering where to begin, Logan suggests working through the presbytery to identify the needs and opportunities. Community Presbyterian’s next mission field trip is going to take Easter baskets to children in the hospital.