

On a Mission

Essential News from Christian Reformed Home Missions

Christian Reformed Home Missions serves the churches, ministries, and members of the Christian Reformed Church in North America through partnerships that work to fulfill Christ's mission.

New York Pastor Brings the Gospel to the Airwaves



Rev. Johnny Acevedo talking about Jesus on Victor Cruz's internet radio show.

Every weekday morning, New York City listeners tune in to Victor Cruz's internet radio show to hear the comedian's jokes and funny commentary on urban Black and Latino culture.

But listeners tuning in one morning this past summer heard something that probably shocked them: a Puerto Rican pastor talking about Jesus. And he wasn't joking.

That pastor was Johnny Acevedo, who leads *Open Door Fellowship of East Harlem*, a new Home Missions-supported church in Manhattan. Through community events that the church puts on at the local East Harlem Café, Acevedo became acquainted with Cruz, who Acevedo recognized from television shows and commercials. "Victor told me that he thought I had a great sense of humor, so he wanted to have me on his radio show," recalls Acevedo. "He also had some church background, so I think he was intrigued

by that the faith angle. Getting this invitation was one of those great things that can come about through the relational activities we're doing in the community."

Soon after the invite, Acevedo decided to appear as a guest on the show, which airs on the Urban Latino Internet radio network. "I thought it would be a great opportunity to share the gospel," Acevedo explains. Throughout his time as a guest on the show, listeners sent e-mails and instant messages, which Acevedo did his best to answer: "I was amazed at how well I was set up to share Jesus through the questions that either Victor or his listeners asked."

At one point during the show, Cruz asked Acevedo to respond to an audio excerpt from the late comedian George Carlin's comedy routine "Religion," a stinging critique of faith. "I did my best to respond to some of the issues Carlin raised," says Acevedo.

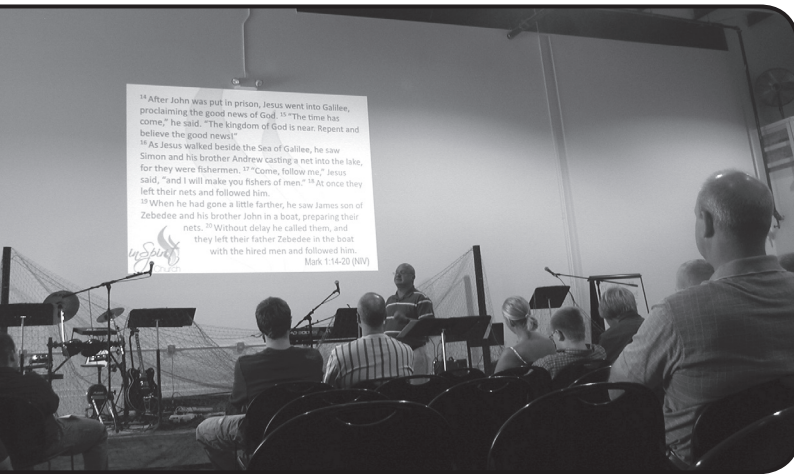
Acevedo was especially interested in being on the show because Cruz typically provides insightful words about race relations in New York City, which Acevedo is extremely interested in. "We are a multicultural church that reflects the rich cultural diversity of the East Harlem community," he says. In fact, although the East Harlem population primarily consists of Puerto Rican and African American residents, there are increasing numbers of Mexican, West Indian, Dominican, Asian, and Central American residents in the neighborhood.

Although Acevedo says his time on the radio left him both exhilarated and exhausted, he was eager to return. "Victor gave me a great deal of positive feedback and invited me to come back on the air again in the future," he says. "I was so thankful for the platform to share the gospel, and I marveled at how God works."

To listen to Johnny Acevedo on the radio show, visit the "News and Events" section of the Open Door Fellowship website, www.opendoornyc.org. Please note: excerpt from "Religion" contains profanity.



"Simple Church" Launches in Michigan



Rev. Randy Ledebauer leads worship at InSpirit Church.

About 150 people listened on a recent Sunday morning as Pastor Randy Ledebauer began speaking about his vision for starting and building *InSpirit Church*, a newly formed "simple church" that meets in a refurbished warehouse in Gaines Township, Michigan. Looking around at the people sitting in folding chairs on their second Sunday morning of worship, Ledebauer smiled and shook his head: "This place is pretty full. That is really awesome. God is glad that you are here."

Supported by Christian Reformed Home Missions, the church was more than a year in the making. Ledebauer served as pastor at a traditional CRC congregation for a few years before taking the steps toward a new church. *InSpirit* held two services in late August to start working out the approach this place of worship will take.

A team of people, mostly from nearby CRC congregations, have played an important role in preparing the way for *InSpirit Church*. They have caught the vision that Ledebauer is shaping, a vision that encourages its members to repent of their sins, accept Christ as their Savior and, "empowered by the Holy Spirit," invites people who have no relationship with God to join in the process of growing and maturing spiritually.

The *InSpirit* ministry will also make sure lots of bagels, donuts, and coffee are available before and after every service. "This is a ministry where we can feed community, get to know one another, and do life together," Ledebauer says.

A former business executive who went to Calvin Theological Seminary to start a second career, Ledebauer stood in the front of a makeshift, wooden stage where the band had just led worship. Dressed casually in a polo shirt and slacks, he described the "simple church" that *InSpirit* will be.

"This is a place where we can come as we are and be special and experience something. That's what an Acts 2 church is all about," he says, referring to where Paul writes about the joy and energy of the just-forming, First Century Christian church.

"Acts 2 talks about a fellowship of believers. It gives a picture of the church when it's working right," he remarks. Too often, he added, things don't work right. "There's a lot of brokenness in life. Things are hard and complicated and confusing. I wonder what this country is all about. We live socially in community on the internet, but we don't even know the people living next door to us."

Ledebauer says the book *Simple Church* by Thom Rainer and Eric Geiger has been inspirational to him. In the book, the authors describe what makes a simple church. These are churches that keep a clear focus on their mission, which is to help make people disciples of Christ and to bring them to spiritual maturity through worship, small groups, and service projects.

There will be three ministries for *InSpirit*: Gathering, growing, and going. Instead of establishing various programs, they will link with existing ones whose job is to better the lives of people and the community at large.

"We will pray . . . and proclaim God's Word in and out of season. We will preach it increasingly and in love," says Ledebauer. In the end, the goal is to develop Christians who reach out in service to others. "We will need to put our faith into action by serving. Serving changes us by taking the focus off of us."

—Chris Meehan, CRC Communications

The Three Choices Most People Avoid

Do you know how the gifts God has given you will be divided should something happen to you this year? You only have three choices for who will be the next steward of those resources, whether you have much or little: your heirs, the government, and charity. These choices present a problem that impacts a large majority of people. By taking no action

on the above three choices, most people leave it up to the government to decide what to do with their children and assets after they die.

For a FREE copy of "5 Smart Things You Can Do Today To Help Your Family Tomorrow," contact Home Missions at (800) 266-2175 or advancement@crcna.org.

Emerging Leader: Jessica Lefebvre

The Kenneth and Jean Baker Emerging Leaders Scholarship Fund is intended for students who identify with the mission and vision of the Christian Reformed Church and want to test their calling in leadership. Here is the experience of emerging leader Jessica Lefebvre, a student at the University of Calgary in Calgary, Alberta.

"This year has shaken up, disturbed, agitated, shocked, and overturned my world more than any other year I can remember. I am not the same person I was when I began the Emerging Leader Program, and I hope that even the smallest part of the world, the tiniest corner of Calgary, is not the same, either.

"I have learned how to lead. I have been given the chance to bring change to the community at the University of Calgary. I have been given the opportunity to design and lead groups, small and large, for recreation, for intent, for the kingdom.

"I have been given grace. Many ideas and projects I was a part of did not last, succeed, or come to fruition. But the extension of grace, without guilt or shame or retribution, has allowed me to dream; not just to catch glimpses, but to be in the presence of the future, our future.

"I have been given unto. Because of this scholarship, I have been able to attend and be involved in partnerships and events that I otherwise would have been unable to attend, such as the CRC Campus Ministry convention in Grand Rapids, Chair of Christian Thought lectures, and the Sojourners' Mobilization Against Poverty in Washington, D.C. I have also become the first intern at the Lantern Community Church."

Church Planter Seeks to Fill Spiritual Void in Rhode Island

When church planter Todd Murphy and his family moved to Providence, Rhode Island, eight years ago, he was told that ministry in New England could not be successful. It was hard for him to argue with that. "Providence is a spiritual black hole," Murphy says. "People there are cautious and often consumed with their own lives." Additional challenges include the presence of a large mafia, a sex trade, and the highest number of adult bookstores per capita in the U.S. On top of that, the area's unemployment rate is among the highest in the nation.

Residents of the growing city also possess a general distrust of the organized church: about 73 percent of the county considers itself Roman Catholic, though actual attendance is estimated below 10 percent and shrinking.

Despite all this, Murphy started *Sacred Journey Church* in Providence two years ago, with the support of Christian Reformed Home Missions. Why? Because he asserts that people in the area are truly searching for something spiritual

in their lives. "While many in Providence have abandoned the church, they have not given up on God, and they have a dire need to hear the truths of the gospel in relevant, timely, and compassionate ways," he says.

But reaching this population is not easy. Through experiences and wisdom from others, Murphy has learned to intentionally engage in spiritual conversations—but to also avoid a forceful or aggressive approach, since this arouses suspicion and many are sensitive to being pushed. Rather, he listens and challenges gently. "For ministry to have an impact here, you have to start with Jesus and go from there," he says. "It will take time for people to work through their questions and understand."

Murphy, who is married with five children, is working with his team to develop various stages of discipleship, possibly through seminars or small groups. These stages will give an introduction to the gospel, discuss spiritual questions, explore what



Rev. Todd Murphy

church is and its purposes, teach and encourage spiritual disciplines, and finally further develop the vision of *Sacred Journey*. Through this, the new church aims to enrich the spiritual life of its members and to help others progress along their journey.

Honoring Lives and Legacies through Gifts to Home Missions

Memorial donations to Christian Reformed Home Missions through September 9, 2009. Those memorialized or honored are listed in bold, with respective donors indicated below each name.

In Memorium:

In Memory of Nick and Anne Bosma

Alvin A. and Estelle A. Bosma
Fred and Janet A. Huizinga Jr.

In Memory of Mahlan L. Dahl

Mary E. Dahl

In Memory of Keith den Dulk

Marvin H. and Edith Den Dulk

In Memory of Russell Frikke

Lester and Eva Brouwer

In Memory of Fred and Nellie Huizinga

Fred and Janet A. Huizinga Jr.

In Memory of Ali Knoppers

Jan M. Knoppers

In Memory of Frederick Pel

Vera Rose Pel

In Memory of Martha Schut

Carl and Ruth Van Til
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Keith L. and Marilyn J. Huyser
Jerry and Sandra Bolt
Ronald and Mary Hesche
Sherwin and Greta Heyboer
Elmer and Alberta Hoffman

In Memory of Joan Suwyn

Richard Suwyn

In Honor:

In Honor of Niel and Willie Rietema's 55th Wedding Anniversary

Sy and Grace Bennik

In Honor of Neil and Winny Vriend

Fred and Sandra Olthuis

In Honor of Shirley and Richard Ledebouer's 50th Anniversary

Dr. Jan P. and Marla J. De Roos

In Honor of Ken VanderWall

Gordon and Shirley Kuipers

Missionary Prayer Requests

Will you consider praying for our Home Missionaries? Below are some recent urgent prayer requests from Home Missions-funded church planters and campus ministers:

Ministry: *Many Peoples Church*, Chicago, Illinois

Prayer request: Membership has doubled at *Many Peoples Church*, located in Chicago, Illinois. Ten new people are entering the new member class, and two young boys are preparing for baptism. Praise God and ask Him to continue to bless this church.

Ministry: *Horeb Presbyterian Reformed Church*, Marlborough, Massachusetts

Prayer request: This ministry seeks to reach Brazilian immigrants with the good news of Jesus. Pray that the Lord uses this ministry to transform lives.

Ministry: *Leadership*

Prayer Request: *Eastern Canada Leadership Development Network (LDN)*, one of 11 LDNs supported by Home Missions, is working to cultivate and train church leaders in Ontario and

throughout Eastern Canada. Pray that the Lord works through this ministry as it seeks to find the next generation of church leaders.

Ministry: *City Grace Church*, New York, New York

Prayer request: Please join *City Grace Church* in New York City in praying for several newly-baptized members who have decided to commit their lives to Jesus Christ.

Ministry: *Campus Ministry*

Prayer request: Pray for Home Missions campus ministries as they seek to raise up young people passionate about their walk with our Father.

Ministry: *Small Groups*

Prayer request: Pray for God's leading hand in Home Missions' small group ministries as many of these groups hope to attract seekers.

Ministry: *Cornerstone Prison Church*, Worthing, South Dakota

Prayer request: More than 100 prisoners attended a recent Prison Fellowship Weekend. Pray that this incredible ministry may continue to reach inmates with the gospel's good news!

Ministry: *MosaicHouse*, Edmonton, Alberta.

Prayer request: "We have seen neighbors and friends come closer to Jesus Christ and make MosaicHouse a part of their weekly routine," says pastor Victor Ko. Please ask God to continue to bless this multicultural ministry.



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