



# ROC 'N' Soccer

**Bethel Baptist Church** of Salem has invested its unique resources to reach the community through various means, including the growing popularity of American soccer. It started with a vision for being a lighthouse for the Gospel — a vision cast by Pastor Hilton Jeffreys. He said, “We have developed a lot of community relationships through our local school partnerships. We do year-round projects with them to meet needs. Our biggest project was the ‘back to school’ event for those in need, where we supplied backpacks, shoes, haircuts, and school supplies to more than 90 kids for all the Salem schools. This kind of project gets our church folk involved in ministry, but we get to build relationships with community leaders and families in need. We supply food for 60 to 80 families weekly—our food pantry does a tremendous job!”

God provided the funding for a long-planned multi-purpose facility on the church property. Building on the foundation of Bethel’s community outreach, God has given the church some unique assets, including a newly constructed gym, a soccer coach in the congregation, and a growing community interest in local soccer opportunities.

Josh Jones came to the church a few years ago and began to get involved. Eventually, he was called as a pastor on staff to work with middle and high school students. Last year, he began a collegiate ministry. Josh and his wife Kelly, along with their two children, are involved in the community in life-changing ways. The interest in local soccer programs has grown in the community in recent years.

Josh said, “Our program, called ROC ‘N’ Soccer, is a 6-week indoor soccer league for students from Kindergarten through fifth grade. Coaches and players meet each Friday night for an hour. During that time, they receive soccer instruction on a particular skill, Biblical teaching about the significance of their team names, a 30-minute game against another team and a guest speaker who shares the hope of Jesus with them, their families, and other fans in the stands. It is our hope that kids will learn several key things during their time with us, including: First, the truth that Jesus loves them, that He created them for a purpose and that He wants a relationship with them. Second, soccer skills that will serve their team well and also help them develop into strong players. Lastly, how to win and lose with integrity.”

The church has gained several families from their indoor soccer program. One father of a player testified, “Our child was on the team called the ‘Romans,’ and we came to understand that this was based on that Bible book. We went home and began reading the book during family time. Then, we started coming to the church and have since started seeking a relationship with Jesus. It’s been amazing that soccer was the door that has led us to pursue faith.” ■

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*Consider how your church could impact your community in such practical ways. For more information, visit Bethel’s web site:*

 [tinyurl.com/rocnosoccer](https://tinyurl.com/rocnosoccer)