



CHURCH GROWS Through Planting

Crosslink Community Church and Fishersville Community Church

The idea of sending good people to plant another church, especially key leaders and vital resources, can be a fearful thing. A church plant (or replant) typically reaches new people and experiences growth in the early stages. What's surprising to many is that church planting often leads to growth for the sponsoring church as well. Gaining by losing seems illogical, yet that has been the experience of **Crosslink Community Church** near Harrisonburg, Virginia.

Fishersville Community Church is a replant of an old, historic church in a prime location in Fishersville. A few years ago, the long-established church lost its pastor, just as it had lost much of its vitality over the years. With the help of the SBC of Virginia, a coaching process began to guide the church toward revitalization. This effort led to a connection with Crosslink Community Church, their neighboring church. Crosslink stepped in by providing guest speakers, musicians, volunteers, and resources. Eventually, these efforts led to the replanting of Fishersville Community Church.

Crosslink is no stranger to replanting—that's

their own story from more than 15 years ago. Today, Crosslink is a vibrant, healthy church with hundreds in attendance each weekend. It has become a hub in the lower Shenandoah Valley for assisting struggling churches, crossing both denominational and cultural lines. Their willingness to serve other churches has brought countless blessings. Though their goal was never numerical growth, that's exactly what happened in the process of helping Fishersville.

Crosslink's lead pastor, Matthew Kirkland, shared, "Over the past several years, we have annually baptized around 50 people. This past year was our first full year of ministry with the replant at Fishersville. During that 12-month period, Fishersville baptized 30 people, and Crosslink baptized 72 people. When you add those numbers together, we baptized 102 people—literally twice our normal yearly average. Praise the Lord! He is good!"

Fishersville Community Church's lead pastor, Chris Smith, added, "God's plans are far greater than ours. God had put a burden for church

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planting on my heart for years. I thought it was someone else's calling, but I had to be obedient to the opportunity God sent. Since we started, all the metrics are overwhelming and so unexpected."

Pastor Kirkland rejoiced saying, "The SBC of Virginia proved that 'You Are Not Alone' is not just a slogan. SBCV came alongside

a hurting church searching for what to do. They also came alongside a growing church with a growing desire to plant churches, but needed advice on its next steps. The SBCV serves as a strategic tool in God's hand, helping both the strong and the struggling."

This is a powerful example of the need for and the blessing of church planting. ■

