

Neighbors Partner for *Revitalization*

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Mount View Baptist Church in Charlottesville reached a crucial point in its history. The church had been in decline when current pastor David Hallingshead sought the aid of Rusty Small, the SBC of Virginia (SBCV) Revitalization Strategist. After trying new strategies to reach the community, the church saw some growth, but it was not sustainable. Additionally, Pastor Hallingshead announced his upcoming retirement. Not wanting to hand over the reins to a new pastor who would inherit the current trends, Pastor

Hallingshead reached out to a neighboring pastor he had met at an SBCV Christmas Banquet some years earlier.

Keith Goad, pastor of **Jefferson Park Baptist Church**, shared that its congregation has always had a vision to assist smaller, declining churches in revitalization. Pastor Goad continued, “The key to this partnership always begins with building relationships.” He regularly invites pastors to small gatherings to study the book of Titus. As a result of these relationships, Jefferson Park has sent some key leaders



to help churches with pulpit supply, interim pastorates, and even conflict resolution.

When asked how the church had leadership to release into service, Goad responded, “As an elder-led congregation, our vision is to invest in and train up leaders who can be sent out to bless other churches.” Goad quoted Paul, who wrote to Timothy: “What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also” (2 Timothy 2:2). The church’s goal is to continually train such leaders for the present and future generations.

The training consists of Bible and sermon preparation studies to discern whether potential leaders are gifted and able to handle God’s Word. It also provides opportunities for teaching Sunday School or Wednesday night services. More recently, Jefferson Park has begun offering formal seminary classes through the Virginia Institute of Theology (VIT).

When Pastor Hallingshead reached out to Pastor Goad about a potential succession plan, Jefferson Park was eager to partner. Goad introduced the leadership of Mount View to Ben Bullard, who had served as his assistant pastor. Pastor Ben was born and raised in Charlottesville. He was saved at age 18 while studying at the University of Virginia and attending Jefferson Park—he was brought on staff in 2014. He went on to earn

his Master of Divinity degree from Southern Seminary.

To build on this relationship, Mount View invited Pastor Ben to preach once a month for a period of time and to get to know many of its members. He was also given a special teaching time with the congregation to share his vision and conviction about the biblical model for church governance. Mount View was open to this crucial shift. Ultimately, Pastor Ben was voted in as the new pastor. When Pastor Goad shared this good news with his church, many members were eager to join the work of revitalization. In fact, some 40 people will join Pastor Ben in the work. Goad added, “We want to send Ben with a team to encourage and support him in the work.” Pastor Ben said, “With no children attending Mount View currently, I felt it was especially important to have families join in the work.” Desiring to be a church that reaches its diverse community, some Spanish-speaking families from Jefferson Park will be part of this ministry. Pastor Ben added, “My prayer is that this will provide some natural avenues for ongoing outreach and evangelism as a church.”

When a neighboring church partners for revitalization, it could mean something as simple as pulpit supply, but it could also involve a commitment to send a trained leader to pastor—or even an entire team for greater community impact. ●

