

Rural Church Plants

ARE NOT ALONE

Acts 8 tells a powerful story of God moving in Samaria. Persecution pushed the believers out of their comfort zone, eventually to Samaria, where, for all intents and purposes, revival broke out.

“Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word. Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed the Christ to them. And the crowds, with one accord, paid attention to what Philip said when they heard him and saw the signs he performed. For unclean spirits, crying out with a loud voice, came out of many who had them, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed. So there was much joy in that city.” (Acts 8:4-8, ESV)

Most of us at this point would be trying to figure out how to grow the organization, hire staff, and penetrate the city with the Gospel even more. However, by the time we reach verse 26, God told Philip to leave the hustle and bustle of Samaria and go to a rural place where few people lived—if any. Demographically, it made no sense for Philip to leave the ministry activity in Samaria and go to the desert.

Recently, two rural church planters were endorsed by the SBC of Virginia

and Send Network to return to their rural hometowns and plant churches.

Church planter Clarence Bailey, who is also a public-school teacher, planted **Shore Community Bible Fellowship** on the Eastern Shore of Virginia in the small rural town of Painter (population 304). This is the first English-speaking church plant on the Eastern Shore partnering with the SBCV.

Pastor Clarence recently hosted an outreach event where over 150 people showed up. He partnered with a sister SBCV church to co-host the event to reach the lost. Pastor Clarence stated, “This was a huge feat because that area of the Shore has not had much Gospel outreach in years and is encouraging to see that God may be showing us some fertile soil.”

There was a “God-moment” at the event for Pastor Clarence. He states, “For me, one of the best moments was having about a dozen students from the high school where I work show up. I invited them for weeks, but I never received a concrete response that they were interested or would attend. They showed up and had a great time. They were welcomed, loved, and most importantly, heard about Jesus! Also, it seemed to create a spark of encouragement for our core group,

showing that they could actually relate to the next generation. My core group is largely older individuals and has expressed concerns about how they can be relevant to the next generation. I was able to capitalize with the students by continuing to build relationships beyond the classroom to help them consider taking spiritual matters more consistently, specifically pursuing Jesus. Overall, it is encouraging to me as I go to work at the high school that I have an “everyday mission field” that God is giving me favor in.”

Please pray for Shore Community Bible Fellowship in Painter.

In addition, travel eight hours west to the small town of Richlands, Virginia, and you will find a new church plant: **Risen Church**. Church planter Christopher Hess recently launched public services, with close to 100 in attendance, in a town of 5,000 people. Risen Church recently called a new elder to serve its congregation. Hess’s desire is that Risen Church would plant more churches that plant more churches.

Both of these rural churches have recently baptized new believers as they serve as missionaries in their small-town communities. We thank God for those willing to answer the call in rural areas across Virginia. ●