

# “Out of the Box” Ministries

## Part Two of Our Report on Ministry Efforts Outside the Four Walls

What a great response to Part One of this report in our August issue! From a virtually no cost idea, to a ministry that is reaching literally thousands of people, God is at work through people right here in Macon County.

A special thanks, once again, to all of you who submitted your “Out of the Box” ministry efforts. The response has been such a blessing we are considering making this an annual report.

If you didn’t get a chance to read Part One in our August issue, we have made it available on our website. Please feel free to share the link with others you know who may be blessed by reading the article.

When we study how Jesus did ministry, we see He was a man on the go. He didn’t wait for people in need to come to Him, He went to where they were.

He was out among the people; the blind man alongside the road, the woman at the well, the woman suffering from bleeding.

Here are more examples of individuals, organizations, and churches taking that same approach to ministry.

And now, here is Part Two of our “Out of the Box” ministry report. Let’s celebrate these successes and take the ideas to heart as we continue to be about God’s business.

### *True Identity is Found in Your DNA*

“Innovation is another way of saying we care about people. No longer can we afford to do the same old things and expect to see new and significant results. We must creatively reach beyond the walls of our worship centers. We must go where the action is and connect with people in the marketplace,” says Pastor BG Nevitt.

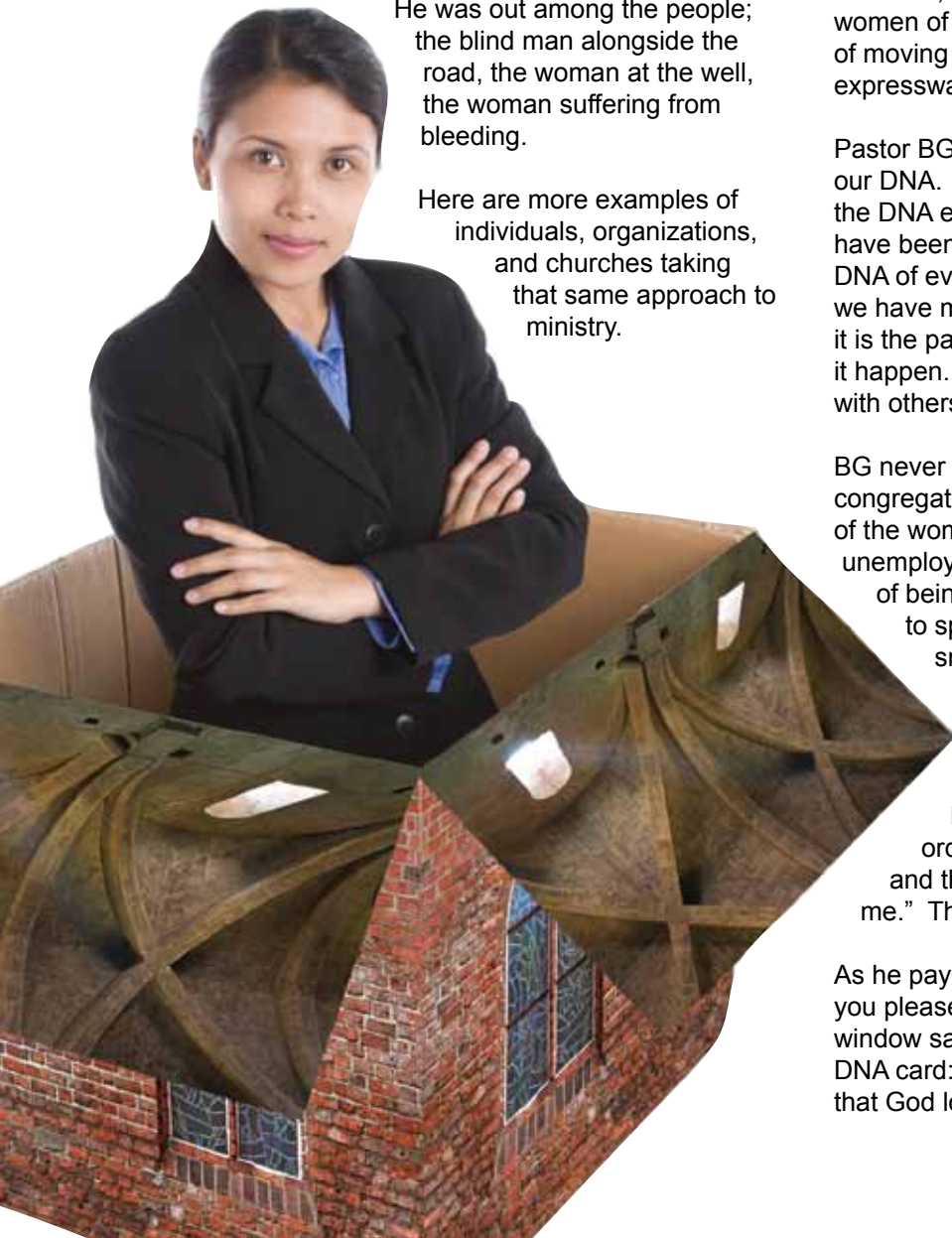
GT Church has a long tradition of shattering barriers that separate believers from those who have not yet experienced the amazing love of God. Video Venues, Car and Motorcycle shows, Blessing of the Bikes, prison outreach, stock car racing, and ministry to the men and women of law enforcement are only a few examples of moving beyond the altars and onto the fast paced expressway of people’s daily lives.

Pastor BG says, “The heartbeat of every ministry at GT is our DNA. Crime scenes are examined with care to secure the DNA evidence that will reveal the identity of those who have been present. The love of God for people is in the DNA of every member of the GT Church family. And while we have many great outreaches and organized ministries, it is the passion of the individuals of this church that make it happen. They eagerly spread their DNA as they interact with others throughout the week.”

BG never tires of sharing how members of the congregation reach out to others. He relates the story of the woman handing out cold bottles of water at the unemployment office, because she understands the pain of being without a job for months. She eagerly wants to spread the hope she has and with each bottle she smiles and places a small card in their hands.

He’s inspired by the man who looks in the rearview mirror as he moves to the drive-through at McDonald’s. He notices a van behind him. A mom with several children is ordering at the speaker. He pauses at the window and then says, “I’d like to pay for the order behind me.” The cashier looks puzzled but agrees.

As he pays for both orders, he says with a smile, “Would you please give them this card?” The young person at the window says, “Sure.” Then he reads the words on the GT DNA card: “I just wanted to be a blessing and let you know that God loves you!”





Samples of a few GT Church DNA cards they distribute

At Starbuck's a similar scene unfolds as car after car makes the decision to follow the lead of someone earlier in the day. Each individual looks at the GT DNA card they receive and a smile breaks out. "I'd like to pay for the order behind me and please give them this card."

The coffee barista stands amazed with the generosity that flows that day. Then twelve to fifteen orders later, she hears the apology of a lady who had forgotten her wallet. The barista smiles and says, "Don't worry, you're order has already been taken care of."

Another divine appointment and the seeds for a miracle have been planted. The Lord adds to the church daily, as

they continue to leave their DNA everywhere they go! The cost of the cards is very low, especially considering the more they order, the lower the cost per card.

*What is the DNA of your church? What is at the center of what makes you distinctly you? How can that core passion be shared with others? Could you plan a series of messages, Bible studies and Sunday School classes based on that passion so everyone can express it to others in a real and practical manner?*

### Taking His Gift to School

David Browning wasn't looking for more to do. The local Mt. Zion biology teacher had more than enough on his plate between teaching, parent-teacher meetings, school functions, and family. He certainly wasn't looking for ways to serve Christ. In fact, when he was a teenager he considered himself to be an atheist. But God had other plans in mind for David who now wholeheartedly believes that Jesus Christ is exactly who He claimed to be!

Coming to know Jesus Christ did not come easily or quickly. David says, "The two most important factors leading to my decision were the overwhelming scientific breakthroughs occurring in virtually every field of science over the past 20 years and the miraculous scientific statements scattered throughout the Bible that primitive

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people of those time periods could have never known.” Several years ago, as he began to share his discoveries, local churches began to ask him to discuss scientific topics that seem to be in obvious contradiction with Biblical doctrine, such as Darwinian evolution, the Big Bang theory, the origin of life, the age of the earth, and other such subjects.



David's book and DVD are available on his website.

“This was not a ministry that I sought out... but when it was obvious that God was opening this ministry door, I knew I needed to walk through it, and it has been a fascinating journey.”

David's presentations have grown over the years to the point where he has created a four-hour DVD set called “The Scientific Fingerprints of God”. He also just published a book entitled: “How to Argue Darwinian Evolution in Public Schools Without Teaching Creationism.”

His primary mission is to help strengthen the faith of Christians, but he has also seen many atheists accept Jesus as their Lord after hearing the evidence offered in his three session presentation. The first session examines miraculous scientific scriptures, “hidden in the Bible, which could have NEVER been written by human minds of that time period.”

Session two examines “The Big Bang Theory”, its evidence, and why it is proof of God's existence. It also examines the origin of life on Earth and how that demands an all-powerful and intelligent creative being. Finally, in session three, David examines the scientific evidence for, and against, Darwinian Evolution.

David continues to accept speaking engagements whenever and wherever he is asked and does not charge a speaking fee. You can visit his web site at [www.scientificfingerprintsogod.com](http://www.scientificfingerprintsogod.com).

*Do you, or does someone in your church, have a profession that could reach others who think the Bible is “just another book of stories?” Perhaps helping to make the connection between faith and healing, counseling and the teachings of Jesus, the historical aspects of the Bible, or as in David's case the “science” of God could be an outreach effort. How could you support or help develop the idea into an outreach ministry?*

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## **Reaching Out with the Hands of Jesus**

*Hands of Jesus embraces our inner city communities.*

In 1999 a few like-minded people who attended a small church on the outskirts of Decatur were very troubled about the poor and needy people of our community and how inaccessible their church was to them. Their concern for this group of lost souls grew (fueled by songs like “Jesus to the World”) and they prayed earnestly for God to show them what they could do to minister to them. The cry of their hearts was, “Here we are, Lord, send us!”

In January 2000, the Holy Spirit spoke a word to them: “Take Sidewalk Sunday School to the streets!” At that word, they galvanized into action, meeting weekly to pray, plan, and incorporate “Hands of Jesus” (a name given to them in prayer).

A few members of the group traveled to New York City to attend Metro Ministries’ Sidewalk Sunday School workshop to learn their methods first-hand. The experience proved to be extremely helpful. Although not affiliated with that organization, or with any other ministry, church, or program, they work shoulder to shoulder with many of them. They have always been a totally, independent ministry, reaching and serving people.

On June 24th, 2000, after much Bible study and prayer and obtaining a suitable curriculum, they held their first outdoor program on the grounds of the old Foursquare Church for one week in conjunction with a community Jesus festival. To help launch this new ministry they blitzed the nearby neighborhoods, going door-to-door, introducing themselves and passing out flyers inviting kids to the event. (They have kept up that practice over the

years, usually before the start of each season.) They were thrilled when 20-30 kids showed up the first day!

The following Saturday, they started their regular 11:00 am Kids’ Church Outdoor program in the Old King’s Orchard neighborhood, which was held that first summer at GUM Park. GUM Park is sponsored by Grace United Methodist.

By that time, Christian Fellowship Church had generously donated the use of their panel truck. The group remodeled the truck to include a stage that folds out of the side, serving as a platform for their programs. Over the years, the outdoor location has changed a few times, always making sure there is adequate shade and consistent availability from June through September.

Chuck Conway explains their approach, “At each program, the children sign up for a chance to win a prize (one boy & one girl win each time) and also for a chance to play games. From the sign up sheets, we compile a list of homes to visit. Board members visit the children each week and invite them to come back. But just as important, these visits help us develop relationships with the kid’s entire families, allowing us to be in a better position to assess and meet their specific needs.”

Over the years, they have helped families in dozens of ways: prayer, rides to church, hospital visits, attending funerals, comforting grieving people, rides to other cities for medical care, providing food, clothing, and household goods, helping people move, mentoring, taking kids shopping, birthday parties & gifts, child care, even letting



*Hands of Jesus converted this truck into a mobile church!*

kids live with them temporarily, to mention just a few. Hands of Jesus also works with other ministries who are better able to take care of some needs.

As fall arrived that first year, they knew it would soon be too cold to continue outdoors. Again, God provided a place for them. God's Shelter of Love offered the use of a large room at the back of their thrift store, Blessingdale's, at 242 W. Packard. They continue meet there from October through May.

Pressing on, Hands of Jesus Ministry continued to serve simply out of their own generosity. But in 2002, William and Nancy Spain donated a 2-story, brick house, which was in surprisingly great shape, at 244 W. Leafland. They group aptly named it the Agape House—a Greek word that means pure, unconditional love. Various church and youth groups, as well as Kathee Parrish, helped clean, spruce up, and improve the Agape House. Thrivent Financial for Lutherans even provided a new roof over the past two summers.

The Agape House serves as the Hands of Jesus office, storage facility, and a place to assemble many projects. Over the years, many teen hangout nights have been held there, as well as youth sleep overs, a homework hangout, and a reading program.

The population of the children they serve is very transient. Chuck and his group noticed that all too quickly, the kids they had come to love had moved out of the Old King's Orchard neighborhood and had no way to attend their Kids' Church. (Many of the families do not own cars.)

New Beginnings Church of God graciously donated the use of their vans for the past several years to transport kids to Kids' Church. By 2008, Hands of Jesus would run as many as four or five routes every Saturday morning, transporting children.

"While we want to love and minister to the kids, we also want to encourage and equip the children to become better students," says Chuck. So in 2001 Hands of Jesus began providing backpacks & school supplies for a few of the families. Since that time, with lots of community support, they have been able to help more and more kids

each year. A big grin forms on Chuck's face as he says, "We were able to help 260 kid in 2008."

The group gathers data on the children in need ahead of time and packs the backpacks for each child based on the school they will be attending and the list for their grade. "While that is more time-consuming," explains Chuck, "it makes sure money is only spent for supplies that are needed."

For many years, Hands of Jesus has also provided funds for children to attend Camp Maranatha in the summer. This week-long program provides inner-city kids with a rare opportunity to experience a totally different environment from their usual surroundings. Chuck shares, "They never forget the peace & serenity of nature, along with the swimming, hiking in the woods, Bible studies, and other fun they had. It's something I think really has a positive influence on them. One year, the Rolling Prairie Corvette Club provided our funds for the campers. Most years, however, several sponsors are needed."

After God's Shelter of Love moved their thrift store out of the 242 W. Packard building, they allowed Hands of Jesus to use much more of the building. So in 2007, Hands of Jesus once again went to work and remodeled part of it for a Youth Center, with a basketball cage, pool table, video games, and other amenities. Needless to say, it has been a big hit with the kids, who often come early in order to hang out with friends and play games. Chuck, who is always thinking of ways to reach more kids says, "If we had more volunteers, we would open it up some evenings for a safe place for neighborhood kids to hang out."

As if that is not enough, each month, one of their volunteers, Dave Coleman, drives to Midwest Food Bank in Bloomington and returns with a load of food. At their building on West Packard, they divide the food into boxes for their Kids' Church families which are then delivered during one of their regular weekly visitations.

Chuck adds, "We also obtain Thanksgiving baskets each year from Moundford Free Methodist's Thanksgiving project and distribute them to our Kids' Church families and to other families in the Old King's Orchard neighborhood."

He continues, "Since 2000, we have designated one Saturday in the fall to be Family Day—a day when whole families are encouraged to come & experience Kids' Church and hear a message of God's salvation. That day every child gets to choose a prize. We have tables full of toys, and the adults leave with a basket full of household goods. In 2008, over 200 people attended the event.

"We are so grateful for the many, many donations we have received over the years. From the smallest to the largest, every one has been a gift that we have received as from the hand of God, and we have tried to use them all to bless our inner-city families," says Chuck.

Currently, everyone who serves at Hands of Jesus does so on a volunteer basis. There are 7 on the Board of Directors, and a team of about 8 others who help carry out the work in various ways.

If you think you might be interested in volunteering, you are invited to visit their Kids' Church program at 11:00 a.m. on Saturdays at the back of the building at 242 W. Packard. They do close when the weather is terrible and on the Saturdays closest to Memorial Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas.

Volunteers are required to fill out an application, be interviewed, fingerprinted, and have their backgrounds checked for the safety of the children.

When asked how LIVING Christian readers might help, a big grin appears as he says, "We would count it a privilege if you would pray for our safety and for the safety of our children & families, for wisdom in the decisions we make for the ministry, that we would teach God's word with clarity and passion, and that it would be received in the hearts of the listeners as God's truth that will set them free. We ask for prayers for the salvation of our children and truly changed lives that demonstrate it."

Tax-deductible donations are always welcome. They may be sent to Hands of Jesus, 244 W. Leafland, Decatur, IL 62521.

**LIVING** Christian magazine is delighted to make a donation to Hands of Jesus in honor of their passion and ministry as an outstanding "Out of the Box" ministry effort in our community.

God spoke to Moses and asked him to lead his community to freedom. But like many of us when asked to take on such a task, Moses resisted and offered all sorts of excuses. God reassured Moses He will be with him; that he won't have to do everything on his own. But Moses stubbornly continued to hesitate. Finally in Exodus 4:2 God asks Moses, "What is that in your hand?" And with nothing more than a shepherd's staff, a large stick, God helped Moses free the entire nation of Israel.

In the past two issues we've seen real-life examples of people in our own community taking "what's in their hand" and using it to be the hands and feet of Christ. We've seen how something as simple as letting people use a parking lot has opened opportunities for others to hear about Christ. We've seen people use their talents to teach others about the reality of Jesus. We've seen how God has transformed lives, then used that person to reach others who have gone through similar trials in life right here in Macon County.

My prayer is you will take these ideas and make them your own. Adapt them, mold them, give them a new twist.

*Have you heard God whisper in your ear? What do you have in your hand? What resources, connections, desires, and passions do you have? What have you seen in this series you can use or modify to reach someone who is in need? Do you trust God to help you accomplish it?*

*May God bless you and strengthen you as you reach others through your own "Out of the Box" ministry efforts!*



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