

Q&A: An inside look at the Crossroads Napoleon church plant

Pastor Wes Hoffmire describes the history, vision of FEC "grandchurch."

By Kristi Reimer, *FECConnections* Editor

Recently *FECConnections* spoke with Wes Hoffmire, pastor of the new Crossroads Evangelical Church in Napoleon, Ohio. A third-generation FEC church plant, Crossroads Napoleon is an offshoot of Crossroads in Wauseon, which was itself planted by Archbold Evangelical Church in 1949. Here's a behind-the-scenes Q&A with Pastor Wes on the history and goals of this infant church.

FECConnections: Why this church in this location?

Wes Hoffmire: Napoleon is only a 10-minute drive from Wauseon, but it's in Henry County, while Wauseon is in Fulton County. There's somewhat of an invisible barrier between counties that keeps people from crossing the line for church. In fact, for many years we had very few people come to Crossroads Wauseon from Henry County.

In the last eight to ten years, that began to change. More people began to make the drive, and their No. 1 comment to us was, "I didn't know the Bible could be relevant to my life." These folks knew their religious

stuff but they were clueless about a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Eventually that handful of people became a group of 70, and we felt that God was directing us to start a church in Napoleon.



Henry County Courthouse in Napoleon, Ohio, as seen from across the Maumee River.

FEC: How did you personally get involved?

Wes: I was formerly on the pastoral staff at Crossroads Wauseon. During our years there, my wife and I always had someone from Henry County in our small group. We saw that God was opening the doors for these people to do something in their own community—they were excited about their newfound faith and wanted to share it.

When some of us at Wauseon felt a prompting to start this plant, we formed a launch team and eventually

called up Scott Wagoner, FEC Director of Church Planting, and Ron Habegger, FEC President. We started with a conversation, spent time thinking and praying, and one thing led to another as God invited us to step through open doors.

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Napoleon church plant *(continued from page 1)*

FEC: How did the team get started forming a church?

Wes: We started in January 2009 holding monthly preview services with our core group and the launch team, then in September 2009 we began holding weekly services. We're renting a facility that was formerly a Harley Davidson dealership, which many people in the community are familiar with.

People already knew Crossroads Wauseon, so we kept the name. We didn't want to be the big church from Wauseon coming down to show Napoleon how to do church, so we tried to have an attitude of serving people. We held community events for teenagers and families, such as our Party in the Park, where we scheduled a service in the park and afterwards passed out free hot dogs, had train rides for the kids, and so on.

Sunday, Jan. 24, 2010, was our "public grand opening," so to speak. We did some radio and newspaper advertising to let people know about us and encouraged our people to invite their friends. That day we started a series on the book of James, with the goal of helping people to understand that the Bible is practical and relevant in everyday life. We've

seen our attendance increase to between 160 and 175 people in the first three weeks. Some of the people who came the first week have returned with friends! We're finding that many of the people who are coming have never really studied the Bible, and they seem to enjoy learning what the Bible actually says.

FEC: What has the community's response been?

Wes: People have received our presence here very well—our original group of 70 quickly grew to 140. And the vast majority of our new people are coming from a place of disconnect with the church. They may have experienced some kind of church in the past but stopped going. Now they keep telling us the same thing: "I didn't know the Bible was relevant to life, and I didn't know I could have relationship with God."

neighborhood outreach. Our building isn't beautiful, so it almost forces us to be out in the community.

Recently I spent an hour with one of our guys who came to faith from a Lutheran background. He'd decided that church wasn't relevant anymore and stopped going. He's a Harley-riding guy—tough with tender heart—and when he visited us, the music was the first thing he noticed: the electric guitar and drums. He even asked himself, "Should I be listening to this in church?" But he heard a message that's changed his life.

And that's what I trust characterizes us the most: Our atmosphere is casual and yet the teaching is clear and life-changing. So this guy can invite his buddy and he knows his buddy will come back, because people are accepted where they're at.

FEC: What is your relationship with Crossroads Wauseon at this point?

Wes: Lots of people ask if we're a separate church or one church with two locations. And we don't really know yet—we're still figuring it out. There's definitely a strong relationship with Wauseon. The leadership team there is functioning as the leadership team in Napoleon, Wauseon's youth pastor is helping us get a youth group going on Sunday evenings, and the worship team shares members.

Plus, my gift mix is not to do a lot of teaching. I'm a counselor, a people person, and I can teach but don't see that as my primary role. Two of the pastors in Wauseon—Matt Boyers and Nate Hamblin—are teachers. So I preach about once a month, and Matt and Nate teach other Sundays. We see this as a long-term arrangement.

So are we independent or one church? We don't know yet, but right now we're enjoying the best of both worlds. Wauseon supports us but gives us the freedom to be different, too.

FEC: How has FEC leadership supported Crossroads Napoleon?

Wes: Without FEC we wouldn't be where we are now—or even exist at all. When we converted the Harley-Davidson dealership showroom into worship space, we received help from FEC for our equipment. Early on, Scott took us to a church planters' boot camp in Texas, which was tremendously helpful. And he meets with us regularly to find out where we're at and what we need. FEC really jump-started us—we are the direct product of their church-planting support efforts.

FEC: What are some upcoming highlights for the church?

Wes: We're excited about helping people start studying the Bible on their own. We're asking people to commit

"They keep telling us the same thing: 'I didn't know the Bible was relevant to life, and I didn't know I could have relationship with God.'"

*Wes Hoffmire, Pastor,
Crossroads Evangelical
Church, Napoleon*

FEC: What are some characteristics of Crossroads Napoleon?

Wes: We're committed to a simple church model, where we use our facility to worship on Sunday mornings but do everything else through small groups or



Crossroads Napoleon held a Beat the Bull event in 2009 to reach teens in the community.



Crowds turned out for a Crossroads Napoleon summer outreach called Riverfest '09 (pictured at right).

to a “10 Plus 10” plan—to read their Bible and pray for 10 minutes each day and see what happens. We’re also building up our small groups. Right now we have four small groups, plus a women’s group and a men’s group—so six total. Most of these are ready to birth, and we could go from six to 12 groups very quickly.

In the long term, we’re looking at our space needs. About 200 people fit into our current facility, but by the end of the year we’ll be close to that capacity. We don’t necessarily want to build a building, so we’ll see where God moves us.

FEC: What can people in other FEC churches learn from your experience?

Wes: First is that God may use them in ways they never expected. I’m having more fun in ministry than I’ve ever had, yet this is not the place I ever thought I’d be. My gift mix is unusual in a church planting context, but God has seen fit to use it. Other pastors might think, “I’m not as charismatic or gifted as someone else,” but there may be a unique setting where God wants to use them in ways they hadn’t considered.

Also, when a church gets large, rather than build another building, it might not be a bad idea to plant another congregation right next door. Each community is unique, and some people aren’t going to leave their community to go to another church.

FEC: How can others pray for this new church?

Wes: We want to be a church that sees lives change, so we would love for churches to pray that God would get ahold of people. For example, a woman came in a few weeks ago and said that when she was younger, her mom was a strict Catholic and her dad was an atheist. She became agnostic. One of our gentlemen invited her to Crossroads, and she excitedly told us, “I think I’ve found God.” We know there are more stories ready to get created just outside the door.

We want our lives to change as well. When you leave a well-established church with all kinds of resources, it forces people to step up. We hope people would find the Lord and grow in that.

It’s really very humbling that God would allow us to be involved in something like this—to partner with our mother church and FEC. At Wauseon, we were pregnant and we didn’t necessarily know it. Suddenly we realized, “It’s time to have this baby!” Looking back, we can see the fingerprints of God on this effort years before we became aware of it. ■

To learn more about church planting in FEC, see page 4.

Church Planting

Church-planting in FEC: an overview

A sign of a healthy congregation? Reproduction.

If you look at all of FEC's church-planting endeavors over the years and across the miles, one thing quickly becomes clear: No two are alike. Whether they're traditional or contemporary in style, started by young families or retirees, these churches are as varied as the people who attend them.

But they do have one important thing in common, and that's their desire to see the unchurched come to Christ. "That's the bottom line," says Scott Wagoner, Director of Church Planting for FEC. "Shuffling sheep is not what we're about."

If there is a typical scenario Scott encounters, it's this: An FEC church interested in planting a church contacts him. He meets with church leaders to develop a strategy, then identifies and hires an experienced church planter to lead the effort. The original church provides a certain level of support, usually in the form of sending a group of people to the plant to help out for a period of time. They may also provide financial assistance or help staff the new church—whatever makes sense in that particular situation. In other words, there's no single church-planting formula.

"FEC doesn't dictate how to cross all the t's and dot all the i's," Scott says. "If they're under the umbrella of like faith, we allow congregations to start, develop, and grow in their own way."

In some situations, the church planter comes knocking first, and FEC's task then is to find the right placement for that individual. "For example, I'm in contact with a pastor who's recently moved back to his home community near Cleveland," Scott says. "He has a real heart for church planting there. So we're beginning to do a 'dance' to gain familiarity with him and he with FEC."

And what exactly does this "dance" entail? For starters, FEC leaders and the potential church planter simply spend time together. "Often I'll ask Ron Habegger and other church planters to informally interview this person, to get to know him," Scott says. "We try to use a combined wisdom from both within and outside FEC. Is this person a fit? Can he do it? We're putting resources into the effort, so we want to make sure the person is capable and qualified—a team player

"A sign of health in any organism, whether physical or spiritual, is the capacity for reproduction."

*Scott Wagoner
Director of Church Planting*



who'll be part of FEC in the long run."

Scott says that church planters generally fall into two categories. The first is the entrepreneurial visionary who has the energy and drive to get a church up and running but who, once the foundation and structure are in place, moves on to do the same thing in a new community. The second, and more rare, type is the founding pastor, who starts at the ground level with a church and remains there long-term—sometimes for decades. But, again, personalities and circumstances vary widely. "There's not one typical church planter that ensures success," Scott says.

"We have all types in FEC, and they're all valuable."

In addition to the plant in Napoleon, Ohio, new FEC churches are germinating in Maine, Missouri, Minnesota, Michigan, and elsewhere in Ohio. And that's good news. "A sign of health in any organism, whether physical or spiritual, is the capacity for reproduction," Scott says. "Leaders, disciples, and congregations all need to multiply. When they don't, it's often because they've gotten comfortable and focused on their own needs. We need to think about ways to invade that comfortable space and help churches and leaders to recognize that, 'We could do so much more by way of reproduction.'" ■

How to invest with the FEC's Christian Service Foundation

Your funds help churches complete building and expansion projects.

By Al Rupp, CSF President



CSF is now in its seventh decade of existence, and after all these years, we praise God that we've experienced no loan losses, and we've been able to return every dollar ever invested, with interest, according to the agreed-upon terms. Your investment funds provide loans to churches for building and expansion projects. You receive the money back with interest. Everybody wins.

Since I keep hearing that the Christian Service Foundation is relatively unknown among the people of FEC, I thought I'd take this opportunity to put in a plug for the investments that we offer to individuals. Here are some details about the ways you can invest in CSF. The best part? By doing so, you help advance the work of the kingdom through FEC.

Term Notes

These investment notes are the primary source of CSF funds. Individuals like you invest in these term notes, which function similar to CDs, at good interest rates. This makes cash available for CSF to loan to FEC churches and affiliate corporations for building and expansion projects. The following table shows the interest rate schedule for Term Notes effective March 1, 2010. While these rates are lower than they were previously, they are higher than most banks offer in this very low-rate market.

Terms	\$1,000 minimum	\$50,000 minimum
12-month	2.00%	2.25%
24-month	2.25%	2.75%
30-month	2.50%	3.00%

Youth Savings Accounts

CSF has offered youth accounts for many years, but they've received very little publicity. Youth Savings Accounts are designed for young people (up to age 25), their parents, and/or their grandparents to save money toward future education expenses. Some parents use these accounts to help teach their children saving

and tithing principles. Some young people use them as a way to save when they begin earning money or receive monetary gifts. Youth accounts currently earn 2.5 percent interest, which is considerably higher than most banks offer for savings accounts, and there's no minimum required. They function as demand accounts, allowing you to make deposits and withdrawals as needed.

Other updates

The process of securities registration is now complete in Indiana, Illinois, Idaho, Michigan, Ohio, Kansas, and Missouri. Our next step in this process is to work on coordinating the registration process so that we can re-register with all the states at the same time instead of following a different registration schedule for each state. This will require a special registration shortly after we complete our 2010 audit. While that means more work for us this year, it will simplify the re-registration process in the future.

CSF congratulates Crossview Church in Grabill, as they've begun construction of an all-new church building. We are delighted to have worked with the leadership there to arrange the terms of their construction loan and mortgage.

The Foundation recently awarded about \$28,000 for the Reuben Short Scholarships for students of FEC churches attending Christian colleges. Most of those scholarships qualify for matching grant funds.

The big job of converting CSF operations to new computer software has taken longer than we'd hoped. The task involves duplicate work and much checking to verify that the new system yields the exact same results as the current bookkeeping system. Hopefully we'll be able to report more progress in the future.

To inquire about investing with CSF or for more information about any of these items or about the Christian Service Foundation in general, call Sara Smead, Bookkeeper, or Al Rupp, President, at (260) 423-3649 or e-mail csf@fecministries.org. ■

Connecting FEC churches to missions through business

Opportunities abound for people to use business skills and connections.

By Doug Witzig, FEC IM International Worker

During our last term in Asia, I helped to start and manage a factory that was a BAM, or “business as mission,” enterprise. The Soaring Glory Tent Co. Ltd. employed 20 people: over half were directly involved in the sewing process, and the rest were managers, office staff, and support workers. As we sewed awnings, tents, and bags, we also engaged in intentional relationships and activities that would contribute toward church planting efforts in the area.

Over the four years that I was involved in this BAM venture, I learned much about the challenges and opportunities associated with this kind of mission strategy. And now, FEC International Ministries (IM), in cooperation with TEAM (the missions agency we served with on the field), has appointed me as their Business as Mission Coordinator. In this new role I will assist in developing and coordinating BAM projects on FEC and TEAM fields. I will also help to recruit and mobilize BAM team members and connect them with investors, consultants, and other resources.

So what exactly is a BAM venture? From the many books and articles I’ve read, the best definition I’ve found comes from Steve Rundle and Tom Steffen’s book *Great Commission Companies* (InterVarsity Press, 2003). They define a Great Commission company (or BAM company) as “a socially responsible, income-producing business managed by kingdom professionals and created for the specific purpose of glorifying God and promoting the growth and multiplication of local churches in the least-evangelized and least-developed parts of the world.” The vision of FEC IM and TEAM is to plant churches. Therefore we want to be able to link a business plan with a mission plan to show how the business facilitates church planting efforts in a specific area.

I believe that our FEC churches are full of business people, young and old, who have the skill sets and the creative ideas to contribute toward new BAM ventures. Please contact me at (309) 634-9675 or dwitzig@teamworld.org to discuss opportunities for cross-cultural business managing, consulting, and investing in many different world locations—with the goal of planting churches! ■

FEC Fall 2009 Quiz-Off Results

Top 10 junior high quizzers

1. Tim Williamson, Brookside
2. Colleen Williamson, Brookside
3. Kayla Too, Pine Hills
4. Sara Getz, Grace
5. Hannah Zobrist, Grace
6. Carissa Diller, Archbold
7. Drew Litwiller, Berne
8. Zach Witzig, Grace
9. Alexandra Perala, Pine Hills
10. Matt Nussbaum, Berne
10. Tyler Webster, Highland Bethel

Top junior high quizzers from each church

- Archbold:** Carissa Diller
Berne: Drew Litwiller
Brookside: Tim Williamson
Crossroads: Rebecca King
Eureka: Ty Maurer
Grace: Sara Getz
Highland Bethel: Tyler Webster
Pine Hills: Kayla Too
Upland: John MaGee

Top 3 junior high teams

1. **Brookside 1:** Tim Williamson, Colleen Williamson, Julian Colon, Seth Cureton
2. **Pine Hills 1:** Kayla Too, Alexandra Perala, Amanda Hughes
3. **Eureka:** Megan Armstrong, Ty Maurer, Bekah Coon, Jillian Pflederer, Karl Maurer

opportunities



FEC IM worker Doug Witzig building relationships with local suppliers for a BAM (business as mission) company he helped found in Asia.



Sewing tents for the survivors of the May 2008 earthquake in Sichuan Province.



The employees of the Soaring Glory Tent Co.



BAM partners and investors—this could be you!

Top 10 senior high quizzers

1. Melissa Felker, Grace
2. Lyndsey Rupp, Archbold
3. Sara Lindenfelser, Grace
3. Eric Holder, Upland,
5. Grace Diller, Archbold
6. Rachel King, Crossroads
7. Grace Lawler, Grace
7. Bekah Steiner, Highland Bethel
9. Lydia Klassen, Grace
10. Adam Winner, Lawton

Top senior high quizzer from each church

- Archbold: Lyndsey Rupp
- Berne: Kelly Hirschy
- Brookside: Adriana Gehman
- Calvary: Judah Sistrunk
- Crossroads: Rachel King
- Eureka: Ashley Steffen
- Grace: Melissa Felker
- Highland Bethel: Bekah Steiner
- Lawton: Adam Winner
- Oak Bend: Caleb Andrews
- Pine Hills: Mary Moser
- Salem: Grace Yuill
- Upland: Eric Holder

Top 3 senior high teams

1. **Grace 3:** Sara Lindenfelser, Sarah Roberts, Maggie Davis, Matt Rossi, Haley Witzig
2. **Pine Hills:** Mary Moser, Noah Powers, John Secheverell, David Boylan
3. **Berne:** Reid Zurcher, Rachel Fahl, Kelly Hirschy, Kristen Lehman



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President's Corner

In memory of Pastor Steven R. Estes

On Saturday, December 19, 2009, FEC said goodbye to a kingdom laborer, dear friend, and faithful shepherd when Pastor Steven R. Estes, 53, was suddenly called home to heaven. Steve had been the pastor of Salem Church in Flanagan, Illinois, for six years.

Steve, who was born on December 10, 1956, in Peoria and married to Jacqueline S. Polson on August 21, 1982, spent many years in service and ministry. Before becoming the pastor at Salem, he was the chaplain at Boynton Mennonite Church in Hopedale, Illinois, and later at Meadows Mennonite Retirement Community. He continued his chaplaincy at Meadows while serving at Salem. Steve had also been an interim pastor at Flanagan Mennonite Church and Prairieview Mennonite Church in rural Flanagan.

Steve was actively involved in the work at Salem Ranch, an affiliate ministry of FEC in Flanagan. Besides serving on the board of directors, he spoke regularly at the chapel and during graduations, prayed for the boys who lived there, and encouraged the leaders and staff members. Steve also had a keen interest in history, having written 12 books on Mennonite history and participating in the Mennonite Genealogical and Historical Society. He was also a member of the Flanagan Ministerial Alliance.



Steve Estes: 1956-2009

I shall miss Steve. His love of God produced a love for people that was genuine. Whenever the FEC office phone rang and Lynette would say that Steve Estes was on line one, I knew that no matter what he was calling about, he was first going to ask me how I was doing and then speak words of encouragement to my heart. Having known Steve for many years, I was most pleased when the Lord called him to pastor at Salem Church. I believed then and know now that his time at Salem, while too short from our view, was given to the church as a blessing from the Lord. Steve's biblical teaching, love for the congregation, and ministry to the boys at Salem Ranch stand as evidence of a life surrendered to the will of the Lord.

All in all, Steve was a joyful man of God who lived his life according to God's Word.

He loved his wife, his family, God's people, and God's glory. He was an encourager, a teacher, and a compassionate, God-glorifying man. His passion for the Lord was deep and love for Jesus was great. Steve Estes will be deeply missed.