

WILLOWDALE
CHAPEL

2015-2016 Annual Report



letter from pastor greg



Dear Willowdale,

Just this week I heard about a third grader who was running around after CR when her mom said, “Hey, stop running in church!” The little girl replied, “Mom, this isn’t church, this is Willowdale where I can be who I was made to be!” I love that. We really are a different group of people—and I mean that in a good way!

As we come into the last few weeks of the 2015-16 ministry year, there is so much to celebrate. God’s power and favor have been so evident, and once again he has done “exceeding abundantly beyond all we could ask or imagine.”

We dubbed this last year, “The Year of Person Pursuing,” in accordance with one of our five core values. We wanted to reinvigorate our outreach, recognizing that Willowdale is not a cruise ship but a rescue boat. Jesus said when he called his first disciples, “Put out into deep water and let down your nets for a catch.” And after a record haul he said, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of people!”

Applying this to our situation, we set what we thought was a God-sized goal: 100 baptisms. What if God gave us 100 people to baptize in the year ahead? How awesome would that be? That would be double what we had ever seen before.

And knowing that as Jesus said, “Apart from me you can do nothing,” we prayed. Ten to twenty people gathered every single day at 6:30 a.m. (We still do.) We prayed through the Psalms, then went to Philippians and started praying through the New Testament.

And God started working. As we pursued, people started responding. The baptistery was filled regularly so that people could declare their faith in Christ. By January 1, 60 people had already taken the plunge!

Then things really got interesting. On January 31, 56 people were baptized. The next week 20 more. On Easter Sunday, 20 more still. To date 216 people have honored Christ and followed him in baptism.

In the midst of this, Gustavo Castaneda joined our team, and a door opened to Lincoln University allowing us to bring Larry Redmond on staff. We now have a department for Community Engagement that we trust will make our community on earth more like the diverse crowd in heaven.

And there was the 60th Anniversary of Willowdale, and Night to Shine, and 14 churches involved in Give|Serve|Restore, and national press for Re|engage, and a mission trip to Thailand, and three weeks of WipeOut Camp, and numerous individuals and groups who experienced renewal.

The pages that follow highlight what many of us consider the most fruitful season in our church’s life. We praise God and thank you for being part of it. Let’s stay prayerfully dependent and keep the momentum going. Let’s be more tightly knit and more missionally focused to the glory of God!

Gratefully Yours,
Greg



upward - loving god

PREACHING AND WORSHIP

In this “The Year of Person Pursuing,” we took a deep dive into several passages of Scripture that had missional flavor: Luke 5, John 10, Acts 2, John 15, and more. We invited people to put blue tiles on the wall symbolizing their boarding the rescue boat; and to hang scripture verses and prayers on the “grapevine” showing their desire to stick with Christ and bear fruit to his glory.



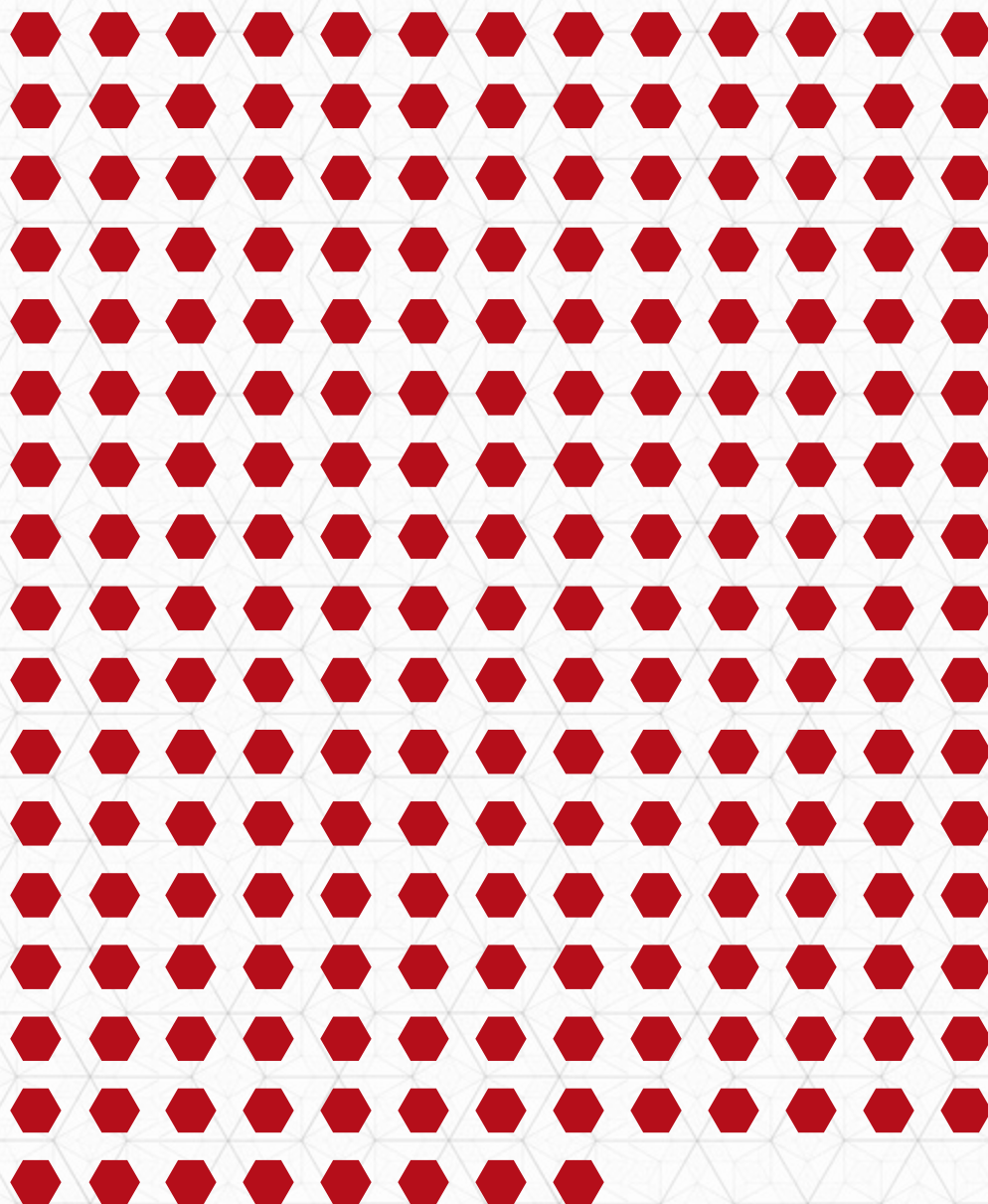
WILLOWDALE CHRISTMAS EP

The worship team got in on the pursuit, producing a Christmas EP that we used to invite people to services and to raise money for the Garage.



TOTAL BAPTIZEES: 216

◆ = 1 baptizee



BAPTISM STORIES

I resented God because I used to pray that my latest use of drugs would end my life. When that didn't happen, I tried again and again to get clean—but that didn't happen either. Two years ago I was trying to get sober for Father's Day. I was going through withdrawal and experiencing so much pain. Then something came into my head and I just surrendered to God. And God finally answered me. Literally ten minutes later I felt absolutely no pain. That's when I started to truly believe HE WAS TRULY REAL!!!!!!

--Joey

I couldn't do this on my own. I had tried my whole life to find answers: tarot cards, Ouija boards, psychics, horoscopes, food, drugs and alcohol but never had I given God a fair try. But now I see all this as God's plan. I had to hit rock bottom to finally reach for him. I had a hard time in the beginning. I only knew God as the punisher. I didn't know about His grace and forgiveness. But I have felt called by the Holy Spirit to be baptized, and I am finally ready to commit myself to God's care. I feel like I will finally be clean of all the darkness I have let into my life.

--Alisa

When I came to Willowdale, I wasn't quite sure at first: Was this going to be the same as the church I grew up in? But the music was so different, and the sermons were like nectar for my soul. The music began to speak to me, and the small groups were a place where I could safely ask questions that I had not been allowed to ask before. Something happened, I can't pin point the time, nothing dramatic happened, no light bulb moment but I know for sure I met Jesus at Willowdale. And the old passed away; I am a new person in Christ.

--Karen



AVERAGE WEEKLY ATTENDANCE

Both campuses saw a 5% increase in attendance over the last year.

JENNERSVILLE CAMPUS

Worship Service - 234

Student Ministries - 40

Kids Ministries – 105

Total Attendance - 379

KENNETT CAMPUS

Worship Service - 660

Student Ministries - 120

*Kids Ministries - 280

Total Attendance - 1060

*On average we are serving another 200 kids per week in our Kids Clubs.





inward - loving each other

CELEBRATE RECOVERY

In its seventh year, CR averages over 100 adults on Monday nights addressing “hurts, habits, and hang-ups” such as chemical dependency, codependency, sexual addiction, abuse, anger and control, food issues, and general life issues. Many people also engage in a small group “step study,” which is where they really work the twelve steps and experience powerful transformation.

The program begins with a large group worship time, followed by a variety of men’s and women’s open share groups. The evening concludes with snacks and hanging out in the café. Additional aspects of CR include The Landing for teenagers and Celebration Place for kids up through fifth grade.

Over 50% of the attendees are not originally from Willowdale Chapel, but many are finding faith and a church home here. This last year 12 of our participants were baptized.

RE|ENGAGE

Each Wednesday dozens of people participate in this gathering designed to strengthen and rebuild marriages.

Because of the program, Felix and Susan LaBoy avoided becoming a divorce statistic. They had been married for 29 years but the fire was out. She had moved out of the house, and divorce papers were pending. But then they discovered Re|engage. “If it wasn’t for Re|engage, we would not be together right now,” Felix said. “The program helped us refocus on issues we had, and learn how to talk to each other again. My wife now says she is falling in love with me more and more each day.”



Similarly, Mike and Karen DiMascola were just hanging on for the sake of their kids. “We were struggling,” Mike said. “We lost the ability to deal with everyday stuff that comes up in marriage. There were three kids, bills, jobs and we just grew away from each other.”



Mike said he and his wife lost the ability to communicate effectively, and the marriage went downhill.

“You think to yourself, what is the alternative?” Mike said. “If you stay in it for the kids, you do it for all the wrong reasons, and it doesn’t make (the marriage) better. We both realized it wasn’t the end game either one of us wanted. This program worked without us even realizing it.”

Through Re|engage God keeps showing people a third and better way—neither the pain of divorce nor the grim slog of an unhappy marriage—instead, growth and rebuilding toward a thriving relationship.

ENROLLED:

156 couples since its inception

ALUMNI:

98 couples have completed the 20-week program

CARE FUND

On the first Sunday of every month, Willowdale gives a special offering to the Care Fund. This money is used to assist those in our church and community with basic needs like food, clothing, housing, medical treatment, funeral expenses, and counseling. Administered by the deacon team, this year the Care Fund:

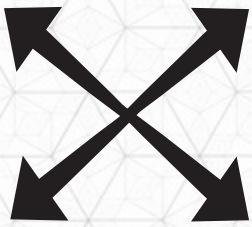
RECEIVED \$92,000
IN CONTRIBUTIONS

CONTRIBUTED
\$25,000 TO
COUNSELING
SCHOLARSHIPS

PROVIDED \$38,000
IN EMERGENCY
RELIEF

Counseling Scholarship:
50 individuals

Emergency Assistance:
30 individuals



outward - loving the world

LOCAL AND GLOBAL OUTREACH

This year our global and local outreach teams consulted with a mission expert from Canada by the name of Ron Burdock. He's one of the great minds in North America shaping how churches "do" mission, and we connected well with his vision and thinking. So we're now subscribing to what we jokingly call the "Burdock-trine" of partnership. Two significant things this means for us:

1. We recognize that mission flows through genuine personal relationships. Therefore we've increased the frequency of our interactions with our partners, making personal contacts monthly.
2. In addition to prayers and funding, we believe expertise is what "the field" really needs. Not large numbers of short-term teams, but rather individuals who can truly engage the mission over time. So rather than "stimulating" an entire congregation's interest, we are building relationships that eventually will enable us to deploy called and trained people to various partners.

We believe this holds great hope for the long-term vibrancy of our work in the world. Ryan and Melanie Gehrman are prime examples. Ryan's training and expertise in linguistics is enabling him to make valuable contributions to translation work in Southeast Asia. When our team went to Thailand in April, executives of Ryan's mission expressed their appreciation with tears and to us, for sending such a stellar teammate.



THAILAND TEAM

In April we sent a team of 14 people to Chiang Mai, Thailand, to lead the children's and youth program for the SIL Annual Conference, the organization served by our partners, Ryan and Melanie Gehrman.

Our team led programming for 70 kids, infant through high school, for 6 full days in 100-degree heat. We focused our Bible time on Psalm 23, which the parents were covering in their sessions.

Everyone on the team played a crucial role and all stepped up in a big way, from leading worship with high schoolers to finger painting with preschoolers. We led games, held discussions, served snacks, went hiking, and played soccer. We also made full use of the swimming pool. (Did we mention the 100-degree heat? Thank goodness, "He leads me beside still waters.")

By all accounts it was the best week ever for kids at the conference. One family stayed an extra day because their kids were enjoying it so much. One high school student who initially stayed home came to the retreat center after his friend texted saying the youth team was so cool. As we left, many parents expressed their appreciation and gratitude, some with tears in their eyes.

We've been invited back next year and are starting to form a team and make plans!



FAMILY PROMISE

Family Promise, a service to families experiencing homelessness, rolled out November 1, with Willowdale hosting families in our newly renovated “Commons.” Nationally, FP typically gets people into jobs and sustainable housing within 60 days of entering the program. So far in Southern Chester County, we’re doing even better!

NIGHT TO SHINE

On Valentine’s weekend, we hosted a prom for youth and adults with special needs. Even though the decision to participate came a bit late, our church stepped up in a big way to make this evening an absolute highlight for everyone: attendees, parents, and volunteers. We had 142 honored guests and over 300 volunteers!

We had people working on publicity, registration, hospitality, decorations, being buddies, directing traffic, providing food, leading games, and hosting karaoke. We also transformed the chapel into a special spot where parents could relax, converse, and enjoy live music.

Not only was it a Night to Shine (and remember!) for everyone involved, but it catalyzed other good works. We’ve made strides in developing an adult special needs ministry. And a theatrical production of Seussical, starring people with special needs, is happening this July.

We’re signed up again for 2017 and look forward to shining on!

NIGHT *to Shine*
SPONSORED BY THE **TIM TEBOW**
FOUNDATION™





outreach challenge

GRANTS FOR THE COMMON GOOD

GRANTS FOR THE COMMON GOOD

A highlight this year was our first ever grant-writing challenge, empowering people in our body to serve our world. Winning ideas included installing “buddy benches” at local elementary schools; starting an international outreach at Lincoln University; putting on a production of “Seussical” starring people with special needs; holding a community “Run for Recovery,” and providing career training for un- and under-employed people.

COMMUNITY JUSTICE ASSESSMENT

Ilana Shipe completed a major initiative this year, employing IJM’s community justice assessment tool to do research on our local community. Countless hours of research and interviewing yielded enlightening results which are helping to inform the work of our local outreach team as well as The Constellation Network.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

We know that heaven is comprised of humans from every nation, tribe, people, and language (Revelation 7:9), yet here on earth “Sunday church” continues to be the most segregated hour of the week.

But we’ve had a growing desire to challenge this status quo (which is one of our core values), and God has given us new opportunities.

Last winter Gustavo Castaneda joined our team: a Spanish-speaking, seminary-trained pastor who is serving our church while also working with YoungMoms to spear-head a new YoungDads program. Soon after, Larry Redmond joined us, our first ever African American pastor. Partnering with the Coalition for Christian Outreach, Larry will do college ministry at Lincoln University while helping to diversify our church.

To launch this initiative, our team rolled out a four-week Community Engagement elective in May, involving 70 people who want to be at the forefront of this movement. Our goal in the coming year is to make 100 new friends of diverse heritage while adding “color” to every team and ministry in the church. Pray with us that “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

community  engagement

THE CONSTELLATION NETWORK

Work continues to move forward with The Constellation Network, the cooperative effort between churches, organizations, and individuals that we helped launch and continue to fuel. Highlights of the year include:

- The Constellation Network received its official non-profit status
- Kevin Palau and Josh Yates joined us for a great event last November which empowered GSR.
- Give|Serve|Restore grew from 3 to 14 participating churches
- Volunteer finger-printing and background checks are being facilitated in compliance with PA Act 153.
- We are about to announce the hiring of an Executive Director!



FINANCIALS

FY16 Giving – Projected through July 31

- General Fund - \$3,700,000
- Shine Like Stars - \$734,000
- Care Fund - \$111,000
- Debt Reduction in FY16 - over \$1,000,000

FY17 Budget - \$3,300,000 (up 6% from \$3,100,000 in FY16)

- Personnel - \$1,758,000
- Ministry Program Expenses - \$386,000
- Ministry Partners - \$433,000
- Facilities Expenses and Capital Projects - \$547,000
- Administrative Expenses - \$183,000

If you have budget questions please direct them to financeteam@willowdalechapel.org

OTHER GREAT THINGS WE DID THIS YEAR

- **#willowdalegratitude** helped us to creatively celebrate a month of thanksgiving last fall.
- We rolled out a **new website** that has had 80,000 views by over 13,000 users.
- We introduced the **Willowdale app** which has had over 800 downloads.
- **Starting Point**, the curriculum for those new or returning to the faith, was employed to great effect, especially in our Women's and MOPs (Mothers of Preschoolers) groups.
- We sent our largest number of people ever to **Joni & Friends Family Retreat** at Spruce Lake in the Poconos.
- We ran three weeks of **WipeOut** serving over 800 children. The “coffee tent” was a great new wrinkle, enabling us to meet and connect with well over 100 parents. We even conducted three spontaneous tours!
- **Al and Gustavo** (global and local partners) brought us sermons during the Christmas season, giving an international flavor to an event that truly is joy to the world.
- **Pastor Gustavo** and a couple of key volunteers started **YoungDads** as a complementary outreach of YoungMoms.
- We served underprivileged children in the Coatesville school district by providing over 100 fully loaded school backpacks, purchased and assembled by our people.

And finally—and worth setting apart on its own—our morning prayer group has gathered every single day for the last year to pray for renewal and revival in our church. Only God knows the full effects of this ongoing effort, which we trust will grow and become an integral part of who we are and what we do as a church.

