

NEWSLETTER

AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAM

by: Dylan Adams

On May 14th, 2021 Family Empowerment Centers ended our 2020-2021 Afterschool programming for the year. It has been a crazy year with ups and downs but we have been able to impact 25 kids' lives.

One of our program's goals is to create an educationally stimulating environment without relying on computers or mobile devices. This year we were able to do just that! The kids were so excited to be a part of the various learning activities. Like an Escape Room which required solving clues about math, and language arts. Building their own board games was another favorite. They each made up their own rules, theme, and board to play on. It encouraged tons of creativity especially when they designed challenges like "Go make a basketball goal" or "Tell your most embarrassing story."

We've seen that the afterschool program is a place where we serve children and their families. Because we have fun ways to engage kids, we are able to introduce their parents to God's love. One mother, five years ago, came to faith in Jesus through her child's involvement at the Family Empowerment Centers. What a wonderful year it has been!



SPANISH MINISTRY

by: Carlos Perez

With great joy the mid-week Bible study in Spanish has been active since November of 2019. This mid-week gathering has sparked more interest in God's word and a deeper desire for discipleship.

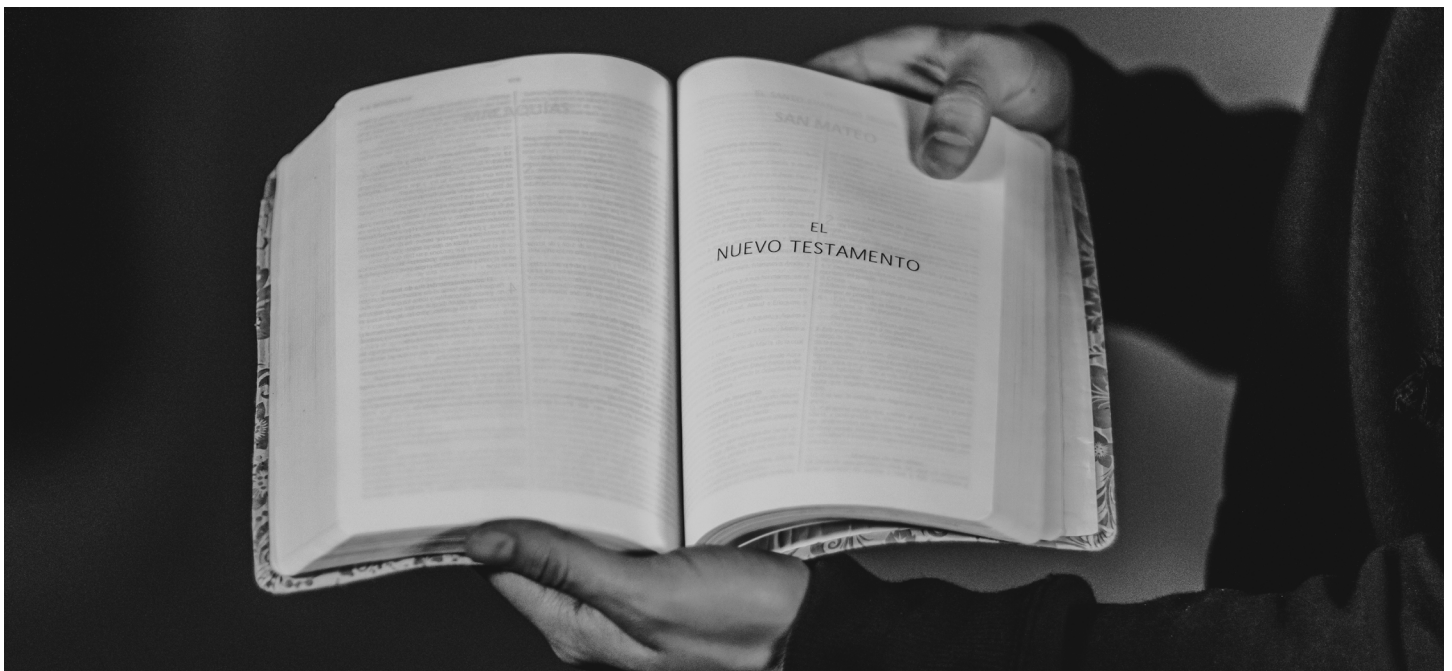
In March of 2021, we started a Sunday school class for our adults in the Spanish Ministry and to God's glory this group now wants to join in with God's Mission – to share the beautiful news of Jesus with our neighbors. The group is planning on taking the responsibility of being the God's vessels of the gospel in Rogers Park. As a Pastor I am humbled and encouraged to see God's Word come alive in our friends for the Glory of God!

On a weekly basis, since early January 2021, I have been meeting with a local father that brings his children to the after school program. This father was convicted by the Holy Spirit to repent from his ways and return to his faith in Christ! Through

the weekly meetups, this dad has once again been encouraged to walk in repentance and confidence of his forgiveness in Christ. The encouraging news is that now his eldest son also has seen the change in his father and also desires to be baptized.

The son has heard of the gospel through his many years in the after school program but now he has seen God's power in the change of heart in his father. God is doing something sweet in this family. Now, each evening, the family has established a new routine to pray and read a portion of the Scriptures together. God is truly merciful and faithful to never give up on His children.

**“This father was convicted by
the Holy Spirit to repent
from his ways and return to
his faith in Christ!”**



ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

by: Rachel Madella

We wrapped up our English as a Second Language program for 2020-2021 in the 1st week of May. To celebrate such a great year, we hosted a thank you dinner for our teachers and graduating students.

We had about 30 students total register for both fall and spring combined. In the Spring alone we had a total of 18 registrations. On average, we had about 8-10 students in attendance every class day. Our diverse students are both from within and outside of our community. We have had students attend from as far away as Valparaiso, Indiana. Some of the cultural representations in our program include: Russia, Venezuela, Taiwan, South Korea, Columbia, Mexico, Nigeria, and Bangladesh.

Excitement surrounds the Summer English Classes that we will be offering for the very first time. It will be a six week internship opportunity for two students whose previous international internship plans fell through.

One of our weekly class prayers is that God would continue to give us opportunities to share his love and light. We are thrilled to continue to do so through the English as a Second Language classes this summer.



Pictured Above: Rachel Madella, Alyssa Dokolas, Samantha Vinesar, Graciela Acosta, Dena Ziemcz, Morgan McAfee, Paul Brutsky, Jared Knelsen, Jessica Comstock, Leah Sprague, Jaileen Villareal, Sara Scazzero and Joyce Li

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URBAN MINISTRIES

by: Tony Silker

At FEC, we have the privilege of meeting all sorts of people from our neighborhood. Sometimes those people are homeless. People that own homes have many different family configurations, personalities, and passions. In the same way, people who have no home have sometimes radically different experiences and personalities. Sometimes we meet people who lack sustainable housing but hold regular jobs and participate regularly in our community. Sometimes we meet people who are altogether unpredictable. Sometimes homeless people are happy. Sometimes they're angry. They're people – you get the idea.

In the last few months, I have been spending time with one man who is less predictable and tends toward expressing anger (Let's call him Peter). I have found myself torn between the desire to champion someone who's clearly having a hard time and our need for organizational safety. We want Peter to experience family, but we have to create a healthy environment for everyone at FEC. Last month I decided to restrict Peter from entering our premises on any basis for the foreseeable future. He reacted with anger.

Yesterday, Peter again walked to our center and he and I had the exchange that has become normal for us: "No, you can't come in, sorry. No, I can't give you a sandwich and a spot on the couch today – maybe in a little while."

I have, however, been more consistently offering to spend time with Peter off of our facility in a less programmatic capacity. Yesterday he took me up on my offer to share a walk around the block. As I walked with Peter he talked about his dreams. He talked about how his mother used to take him to the zoo when he was a child. He talked about some of the people we both know; who was up, who was down, who disappeared. For a little while we were friends. It was good.

I don't know what Peter is experiencing in terms of childhood trauma, mental health, or substance abuse, but I do know that some days he's more "himself" than other days. I don't know that there is a perfect policy for giving Peter what he needs. Realistically I will never be able to create resolution in his family and provide 20 years of stable housing. But I can challenge myself to find creative ways to be with Peter and to constantly remind him that I am not angry at him and that I want to spend time with him, because God is not angry at Him and God wants to spend time with him.

I am grateful to spend time with people like Peter and I am grateful to navigate these sorts of situations, because I believe God uses scenarios that feel like deadlock to redefine how I see salvation, companionship, and care. I am grateful for Peter.

LOCAL FOOD PANTRY

by: Rachel Madella

We use text messages each week to communicate with people from our local community about our food pantry. One memorable exchange is from a woman who comes to our pantry: *"My friend went to the Family Empowerment Centers and got some chickens. He said the chickens were really big! Thank you so much again and a deep thanks to your whole organization for distributing foods and other services for many people, including myself, who are sometimes struggling to make ends meet."*

Overall, we have been blessed by partnerships with churches who have come in teams to volunteer even as we provide for our local community & church family. There are a handful of regular volunteers who join us on the 1st & 3rd Saturdays of every month, but we continue to pray for long term committed volunteers. We are so grateful for those who volunteer to serve here in Rogers Park. Whether in picking up the food, distributing it to families, or cleaning up afterwards, we are so grateful for those who volunteer.

We are also excited to announce that

networking, coordinating, and organizing is underway for the Food Pantry as we wait to move into our new premises!



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