



IGNITE

CHURCH PLANTING

Bringing hope to Chicagoland by starting churches

ISSUE NINE, 2022 BEARING FRUIT IN NEW FIELDS

ACCELERATING JESUS' MISSION BY STARTING CHURCHES

Bearing Fruit in New Fields *(by Lance Hurley)*

Traveling along the highway yesterday, I noticed combines and wagons bringing in the crops that are ready for harvest. These fall sights caused me to remember the words of Jesus when he told his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field." (Matthew 9: 37-38)

This specific direction from Jesus is one we often use to guide our Wednesday Ignite prayer calls. We pray for church planters for specific ethnic groups in our region, for planters for different interest groups and for disciple makers who will see and embrace the harvest in their neighborhoods and in their vocations. God is answering our prayers.

One of these answers is James and Joy Shahabi, who lead Kheimh Molaghat Church. This church ministers to Farsi speakers in Chicagoland and across the world. The in-person church meets at Journey Christian Church in Addison, IL each week and the services are streamed to 300+ people (many of them refugees from Iran) in 11 different countries in the Middle East and Europe. I spent a day with James and Joy at their home in Rockford and they told me stories from their recent trip to Turkey where they met with people from their online church.



Lives Being Changed

James accepted Jesus after he moved to Turkey from Iran as a young man. He met a missionary who told him about Jesus and said he would pray for a medical issue that James had. When James discovered his medical condition had changed, he knew it was because of the prayers this man had prayed. He began to ask questions about Jesus and his life changed forever when he chose to follow Jesus.

Several months later, Joy's uncle visited them in Turkey. While there, he heard about Jesus and decided to follow him. Returning to Tehran, her uncle emailed James and asked if he could help him grow, as there were no churches in Iran. James agreed and they began a weekly study together. Joy's uncle began inviting people to his house and the numbers grew from 2 to 4, then 8 and then 15. These people began to choose to follow Jesus and the church began to spread as people moved to different countries. These people make up the online church that meets every week together.



James shared pictures and stories of 10 people who were recently baptized in Iran. The pictures are blurred as we don't want to see any harm done to the people who are following Jesus in a culture that doesn't welcome this decision. (In fact, James told me that the people who are baptizing the believers will be hung if their identity is known. Those being baptized face jail sentences of 12 - 15 years.) What great courage these brothers and sisters show (and I have a new appreciation for the freedoms we have in our country)! One of the people baptized that day was Joy's uncle who said, "I have been waiting 12 years for this day!"

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**Interested in Church Planting? Contact Lance Hurley
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Disciples Being Made

James told me that he has 25 disciples who are involved in their training process. Then he said this, "We have 16 people ready to start in-person churches in different places. Eight of them are in Turkey, four in Iran, three in Europe and one in Milwaukee." (I chuckled when I heard that outlier.) These people have been with James and Joy for four years and they are making disciples of Farsi speakers where they are all living.

The picture shows James with some of the key leaders in the online church. While in Turkey, James and Joy were able to spend quality time with these friends. Ignite helps support two of these missionaries who are bringing the hope of Jesus to people where they live. It is exciting to see disciple making take place here and across the world.



Streaming Church to the World



While many of us are familiar with online church, Kheimeh Molaghat is practicing engagement and disciple making with those who are connected virtually. Joy oversees disciple making with women in the church and while I was in their home, several from overseas called with questions and prayer requests. This picture shows the prayer room that takes action during the weekly services. As the services are streamed from Addison, Joy monitors prayer requests coming into the church and this team prays for them. Prayer is a key piece of their worship time together. After the streamed service, groups gather together virtually to talk about what they have heard, pray for each other, and then enjoy fellowship. The online church is growing and developing disciples who are sharing Jesus with others.

Some Final Thoughts

Attending KM Church a few weeks ago, I was sitting there during James' message. I don't understand Farsi and was praying for James and the church. I remarked to myself, "I don't understand a word that is being said." That's when I received one of those gentle nudges from the Spirit, "Ignite didn't start this church for people like you. It was started for people like this, who need to hear about Jesus in their own language."

That was a good reminder to me, and I am grateful for the ministry of James and Joy Shahabi and Kheimeh Molaghat Church. This experience also caused me to think about all the other languages and people groups there are in Chicagoland. We will continue to pray for the workers who will reach the incredible harvest in our region and beyond. Will you join us in praying Jesus' prayer?

What's Next? With Dr. Gary Johnson

As a church leader, have you ever wondered...?

- What's next for our church?
- How can we reach the next generation?
- What does life-changing evangelism and discipleship look like?
- How can we address the current culture effectively?

Ignite Church Planting wants to invite you to a one-day event featuring Dr. Gary Johnson from E2 Elders. This free seminar will focus on some of these timely topics as Gary helps leaders discern where their church is and determine some next steps forward.

"What's Next?" will take place November 16 from 9 am – 2 pm at Adventure Christian Church, 70 Ken Hayes Dr, Bourbonnais, IL. Lunch will be provided. Register by emailing robyn@ignitechurchplanting.com.

