

FELLOWSHIP NEWS



TURNING TRAGEDY INTO OPPORTUNITY IN INDIA

In a small Indian village, a woman watches her dying husband take his last breath and calls for the Hindu priest. As custom demands, he will administer the last rites, conduct the funeral service, and oversee the body's cremation. Here, in her village, the Hindu priest presides over life and worship, from birth to death.

On the outskirts of the village, another woman cares for her dying husband. When her family left their Hindu faith and believed in Jesus, they were excluded from the Hindu community. Now, they are alone. Their small village church won't be able to help them pay for a Christian burial, and they refuse to turn to the Hindu priest for help.

Hindus who want to follow Jesus face a common fear: "Who will take care of my body when I die?" Reverend Syam Babu Mari and Esther Sunitha, his wife, have stepped into this crisis for Hindu converts to Christianity and offered a solution.

Their ministry supplies local pastors with wooden coffin boxes for Christian burials. Zion Evangelistic and Care Ministries (ZEC) serves the greater Visakhapatnam area in Andhra Pradesh, southeastern India, an area with over 6 million people.

ZEC, founded by Syam Babu and Esther Sunitha, works to establish reproducing communities in the greater Visakhapatnam area. Their network oversees and equips 3000 local pastors through Bible training and evangelistic crusades. They also supply local pastors with 20-25 coffin boxes, so they are able to allay the fear of Christian families. The coffin boxes are built out of local, available wood for about \$25 each.

Though ZEC's initial relationship with Northwoods Community Church in Peoria, Illinois, other FEC churches have become involved by sending teams to assist with leadership training, care ministries, and carpentry to build coffin boxes. Learn more about ZEC on the FEC website.



Northwoods Church Launches Ministry Training School

When Northwoods Community Church in Peoria, Illinois, began in 1990, they envisioned reaching the 150,000 people in the greater Peoria area who did not attend church. Today, that vision has come to life in the surrounding areas of Galesburg, Chillicothe, Canton, and Princeton. As their outreach continues to grow, so has their desire to plant more churches and train young men who want to lead them. To accomplish that vision, Northwoods will launch their 2-year ministry training program this fall.

The ministry training school will equip students through graduate-level classes that encompass theology, leadership, and pastoral training. In addition to classroom settings, students will also participate in a residency program at Northwoods. During their second year of study, each student will explore church planting opportunities with FEC.

For more than a decade, founding pastor Cal Rychener has desired to train young pastors to plant and lead churches. By 2030, Northwoods plans to plant churches in 20 key Illinois cities; however, their desire to plant churches extends beyond Illinois to include anywhere in the world where God opens the door.

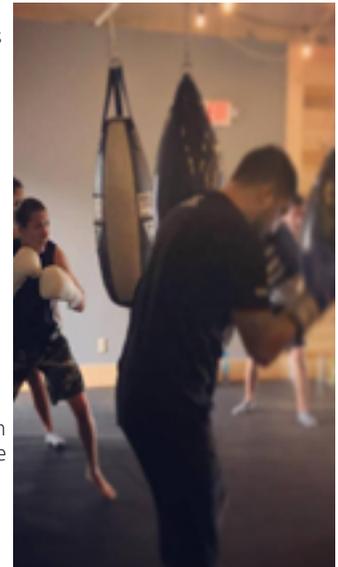
In the future, Northwoods hopes to expand the ministry training school to include creative arts, children's ministry, student ministry, and an administrative track.

FEC Welcomes... Neighbors Church in Portland, Maine

"Got faith? Maine the least religious state in the nation." The *Bangor Daily News* recently published a story about changing religious views in Maine, citing several polls. FEC leaders and church planters Eric and Mandy Wood believe that Maine is ripe for outreach. At a time when many churches in Maine are declining in attendance or closing their doors, Neighbors Church is on the rise.

In 2014, Neighbors Church began in a downtown Portland building, and Eric and Mandy served the refugee population as well as the growing number of homeless drug addicts. Two years later, Eric decided to try out a local Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) gym to help him manage stress and improve fitness. The first week he left with a sore shoulder and a bruised rib. Over time, he gained confidence and made friends. When the gym went up for sale, Eric and a friend decided to buy it.

Now, the gym serves as the missionary side of ministry and the church rents the space on Sunday morning. After they clear the gym and clean sweat and blood off of the floor, Sundays take on a simple feel. However, what makes Neighbors Church unique can't be found on Sunday morning. Eric describes their mission, "Love your neighbor as yourself. That's a good place to start. And, neighbor doesn't define a certain person. It describes everyone."



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