

Ramblings About Asbury

When my family arrived at Asbury in June 2014 the only groups identified below who were using the facilities at Asbury were the Quilting Club, Scrapbooking Club, & Tai Chi.

When we arrived, I began to survey the community and made it my intention to meet as many community leaders as possible as fast as I could. I met with the county sheriff, the police chief, the mayor, one of our judges, and the superintendent of the schools. I asked each what the needs of our community are, and what we as a church could do to meet those needs.

At the same time I began meeting with families of the congregation in order to get to know them on a more personal level. I established a regular visitation schedule for home-bound members and in addition to myself, we setup visitation teams so our home-bound members would have more contact with the church. I also established a monthly communion service at one of our local nursing homes which did not have any communion services being offered.

We spent the first year hosting mini-conferences for the community. The first was on the Millennial Generation. I utilized a University of Texas at Permian Basin professor as a presenter and this served to open up discussion on what young adults are searching for in the church. We then held a conference on Human Trafficking. The I20 corridor passes through Odessa and as a result we are a passthrough for many traffic victims. This conference included participation by the FBI, Texas Rangers, City Police, one Judge and many other agencies in our area. We began working with the child advocacy center in our community and discovered Ector county has the second highest child abuse rate in the state of Texas. We partnered with them to host their first annual conference of child abuse which focused specifically on the area of childhood sexual abuse. This is an area of vital importance to myself since I am an adult survivor. This conference featured nationally recognized speakers and presenters. Participation was extremely high, so much so that the following year the event had to be hosted in a hotel to accommodate the large number of attendees. During this conference we were introduced to a trio of ladies who desired to establish a new ministry which would serve women in need in our community. Thus, "The WELL, Hand of Grace" ministry was born. These three ladies were given two offices in our complex in which to meet with ladies and children and serve them in whatever way possible.

Midway through our first year we were also approached about establishing a new scouting program. We chartered troop 777 and a new Cub Pack at Asbury and we now have dozens of families in our complex on multiple nights each week.

We hired a new "part time" youth minister who has worked hand in hand with our early childhood director. (Cody and Sarah Griffin) These two have accomplished remarkable things in the life of our kids, as well as in our community. We have a VBS which literally maxes out our complex. We have an annual Easter Egg hunt in a community park which includes thousands of eggs and dozens of community families and kids. Our Fall Festival provides games, activities, and food for many of our neighborhood area families, and our youth are so excited they are inviting their friends to attend our youth group. We sent the largest number of kids of all ages to this past summer's series of camps at Sacramento Assembly, and this year

looks to be a larger number than last year. My wife Stephanie and I were the chaperones for the Jr. & Sr. High camp. We will be returning this summer as well.

Other outside ministries and organizations have approached the church to ask for meeting rooms and the answer is always “Yes” if there is any way we can possibly accommodate them. It is my belief that if we express concern for the community the community will listen when we share the love of Christ with them.

We have now hosted two events, one each August, where we feed breakfast to all the principals, counselors, and coaches of the Permian line of schools: Elementary and Jr. Highs which feed into Permian High. This encompasses ½ of the leadership in the ECISD. The superintendent and his staff also attend. We have arranged a program for each of these events and the purpose is simply to express our support for our schools. Asbury has also supported the adopt-a-school program for many years and they have served a local elementary school not far from the church.

The establishment of MOPS has opened the door for many young mothers to come to Asbury twice a month and many of our congregational members assist with this program. This offers the opportunity for them to build relationship with these ladies and some have begun to attend Asbury.

The VSC ministry is small but as a ministry to Adult Survivors of childhood sexual abuse, the work being done to support growth and healing is vital. This is the only group like this in existence in Ector or Midland counties.

When we arrived at Asbury there were no mid-week classes taking place and while there were several adult Sunday School classes and classes for the children, the pastor was not teaching a class. I now teach a class on Sunday mornings between services and we established a Wednesday evening program. For the first year my wife cooked a meal for approximately 70 adults and kids who attended. After the meal the group divided into classes for different age children and youth, while I taught a class to all the adults. Midway through this year we decided to expand the offerings. My wife still cooks but she now has other ladies who are taking turns preparing meals and we have at any time up to 5 different classes being taught for the adults. The youth leaders have expanded the program for the teens as well. They are addressing real life issues, which appears to be hitting the mark with the kids.

We have become strong supports of the Foster/Adopt program in our community and we have three families in our church who are looking to adopt this year, Steph and myself included. We are going to add a little girl (4-8 year old range) to our five kids (4 boys & 1 girl who is the youngest) Only two currently still live at home with us. This is a passion for my wife. I kept resisting saying it was not fair to a child to have a dad who was an old man. She finally convinced me when she said, “old parents are better than no parents at all.” I could not argue with that and since she is the best mom I have ever see, I trust her as we are just about at the end of the process and should be looking for a child by mid summer.

This past Fall we made a major change in our worship services. We had been discussing the possibility of adding a praise team into our mix but it seemed like an impossible task since no

one in the congregation was able to do it. We began to pray and ask people in our area if they knew anyone who would like to play in a praise team. I was given the name of a man I should call. I was given his name by a person who was not even a member. I called and Steph and I visited the family for the first time. They were a ready made praise team; husband, wife, daughter, and son. They came on board the church last September and they now lead worship in the 11:00 service. Their attitude has been wonderful, always encouraging others to join them. We now have two of our youth singing and playing along with them each week. This addition has broadened the ability of Asbury to reach out to many different people. We have one service which provides a traditional feel and an instrumental service which focuses on new contemporary music. Both services have grown since this change has taken place.

We have a children's music program directed by Barbara Shinn which includes both church and non-church members. They meet each week on Wednesday after school to practice. They then join us for the Wednesday night dinner and programs if they desire. These elementary children generally sing in church once a month and this brings new people into the church who might not otherwise come.

We host piano recitals, music theory camps, and outside groups who need a place for a meeting. We are attempting to be available for any service which will edify people and open the way to build the kingdom through building relationships.

All this is simply to say that Asbury is a very busy place. What makes it so remarkable is I have yet to have a single person question why so many outside groups are using our facilities. The people here are warm and welcoming and receptive to new ideas.

In the past 20 months Asbury has been blessed to celebrate 31 baptisms, 7 confirmations, and 59 new adult members joining the congregation. Of the 59 who have joined, 20 have been through profession of faith. In total this is 80 new individuals in the kingdom of God. God is truly blessing at every turn.

I don't know if it is necessary right or not but I often use a mantra. "Serving God ought to be fun! If it's not we are doing it wrong." I believe this. There are times of stress and pressure. Times of pain and grief. But over all we should be having fun! We are serving our Lord and He is blessing the work we set our hand to accomplish. What could be greater!

Asbury Hosts

Boy Scouts Troop 777
Monday's @ 7:00pm



Tai Chi
Tuesday & Thursday @ 6:30pm



MOPS

1st & 3rd Tuesdays @ 10:00am



Victim - Survivor - Conqueror

Sex Abuse Support Group

Tuesdays @ 7:00pm



CPS - Foster/Adoption Classes

3rd Tuesdays @ 6:00pm



Cub Scout Pack 777

Thursdays @ 7:00pm



West Texas Twilight Vision

1st & 3rd Thursdays @ 12:30pm



Quilting Club

Thursdays @ 9:30am



Scrapbooking Club

One Friday & Saturday Each Month



Harmony Home

Special Event Hosting



The Well - Hands of Grace

Women's Advocacy Center

Office Located @ Asbury



