



THE ORCN REPORT

Winter 2025

A publication of the Ohio Regional Church Network

What is the Ohio Regional Church Network?

The Ohio Regional Church Network (ORCN) is a network of churches in Central Ohio committed to developing healthy churches and pastors through a network of healthy relationships and strategic partnerships focused on mutual encouragement, accountability, and missional collaboration.

You can learn more about ORCN at ohioregionalchurchnetwork.com.

From Awaken Church in Columbus

My Village Ministries.



Our partnership with My Village Ministries (MVM) began over a decade ago when Phil Krause, an Awaken pastor, launched the first MVM chapter right here at Awaken. Since then, the ministry has grown significantly, now partnering with dozens of churches across multiple states.

MVM is an impactful expression of the gospel lived out through tangible care and authentic community—something only the local church can truly provide. It continues to be one of our most meaningful opportunities to demonstrate gospel-centered unity with the broader church throughout Central Ohio.

The families MVM serves are often single-parent households facing crises such as job loss, illness, or housing instability—situations that can make it difficult for parents to care for their children. MVM steps in before foster care becomes necessary, providing temporary hosting for children, which can last anywhere from one night to several weeks.

There are several ways church members can participate in this ministry:

- Family Coaches walk alongside parents, helping them connect with needed resources while also supporting the host family.
- Care Teams provide practical assistance—such as meals, diapers, and transportation—to surround and sustain host families.
- Long-Term Mentors invest in children even after their hosting ends, continuing to provide stability and discipleship.
- Host Family care for a child in your home for a short period of time.

The outcomes of this ministry have been remarkable and deeply transformative for our community. Collectively, children have been hosted for over 11,000 nights, and every child hears the gospel and attends church with their host family. Through partnerships with dozens of churches, MVM has become a vibrant display of gospel unity across our city, state, and beyond. In Franklin County, MVM's efforts have contributed to a 40% reduction in the need for foster care, and by God's grace, over 99% of hostings result in family reunification—which is always the ultimate goal.

MVM beautifully embodies Paul's exhortation in *Galatians* 6:2: "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ."

If your church is interested in learning more about becoming an MVM partner church, visit myvillageministries.com, navigate to "Get Involved," and select "Church Partnership" from the dropdown menu.

From Darby Creek Church in Galloway

Our Experience of Restarting an Annual Women's Retreat.



This October Darby Creek Church (DCC) organized a women's retreat which is now becoming an annual event after years of not having one. Retreats in general can be such a great opportunity for people to connect with each other and with God in deeper ways. There is often something special about getting away from our daily routine and intentionally pursuing spiritual growth and relational connections with other believers.

Location, location, location. Where to have the retreat is always a big question. The last two years the DCC women have had their retreat at Deer Creek State Park in Mount Sterling, Ohio which is about 25 minutes south of the 270. The retreat runs from about 4pm Friday to 4pm Saturday. Cost is always an issue when the retreat is not hosted at the church building. DCC has at times subsidized some of the cost for the retreat. We also have done fund raisers (cookbook sale) and utilized local grocery reward programs (e.g. Kroger Community Rewards program) to raise funds to offset costs.

What content to cover at the retreat can also be a challenging decision. Do you have someone from your church communicating the primary content for the retreat? Do you purchase a "retreat in a box" (watch video teachings by respected Bible teachers) and have small group interactions over the content shared? The last two years we have elected to do

that later. The Gospel Coalition provides a Retreat Ready experience from women. The videos are teachings done at past Gospel Coalitions Women's Conference and they include professional done teaching handouts and retreat promotional materials in the purchased product. This resource can be found at thegospelcoalition.org/tgcwomen/retreatready. If your budget does not allow this another good option might be to check out some of the free resources for women's retreats at Revive Our Hearts ministry site at reviveourhearts.com/videos/collections.

At both our men's and women's retreats we try to carve out some time for the participants to go out for a walk or spend time with the Lord alone in order to really benefit from the retreat. Our ladies also do some relationship "mixers" and fun games to encourage interaction with people they don't normally spend time with.

Each year we plan on reflecting on the retreat experience and feedback we get to help tweak things and make it better for those who attend. We hope sharing this experience helps other churches in ORCN to plan women's retreats that encourage women in the walk with Jesus and provide opportunities for relationship development. If you have any questions about our women's retreats or want to interact with our retreat organizers, just send us an email at info@darbycreek.org.

From Grace Point Church in Lewis Center

The Transition after the Transition.



The first weekend of September marked three significant milestones for Grace Point. The church celebrated 25 years, Terry Lewis retired from his role as our Senior Pastor, and Tom Houser stepped in as Senior Pastor. It was a celebration and a transition that had been prayed for and planned out for nearly three years. When Sunday evening rolled around, we were able to look back and smile at all God had done and is continuing to do in and through our church family. It was an absolutely wonderful weekend!

Of course, the next day was Monday. We had an elders meeting that evening. There were sermons to write, worship sets to arrange, and staff and volunteers to manage. There were kids, students, and adults to disciple. We had two funerals to prepare. Our food pantry was open that Tuesday evening. Life Groups met as usual. In one sense, everything felt the same. But in another sense, everything felt different. The "transition after the transition" had begun.



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Knowing that change is difficult for people, our elders chose to stay focused on this “transition after the transition” in the coming year. Terry and Kelly are on a four month sabbatical from participating in Grace Point events to give everyone time and space to adjust to new leadership. Tom is learning new rhythms of sermon prep, leadership meetings, pastoral care, etc. Our non-staff elders are taking on more responsibilities for ministries in the church. We are working to keep our church family united and walking into ever-deeper community with one another. Jay Flinn has volunteered to take on the role of Treasurer, and Jay Martin is giving us two days a week of time spent on Administrative needs and Adult ministries.

At the same time, we are beginning to look ahead to our next “transition after the transition”. Though there is *much* about our wonderful church family we want to leave untouched, the Lord has given Tom a unique vision for Grace Point’s future. It is a vision of a church family living ever more intimate lives with Jesus, reflected in Paul’s prayer in Philippians 1:9-11 - “And I pray this: that your love will keep on growing in knowledge and every kind of discernment, so that you may approve the things that are superior and may be pure and blameless in the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God.” What does that look like, and how will we get there, and how do we pass that life on to a watching world? These and many questions will be asked and answered in the years ahead.

The transition was a blessing. The transition after the transition has been a blessing. And we are praying for God’s blessing on the next transition after the transition. To God be the glory!

From Linworth Road Church in Columbus

Mercy Ministry Highlights

Food insecurity is real. Rising prices for basic food items coupled with the government shutdown affecting food-related resources exposed how many in our community are affected by even temporary instability in our economy.



The LRC Food Pantry has been busy this year helping folks in our community and in our church family. We partner with 211 (Lutheran Social Services) to provide basic nonperishable food items like cereal, rice, pasta, and canned goods. In warmer months, we supplement this with produce from our Giving Garden and we are sometimes able to offer frozen meat and fresh bread. While our food pantry receives funds as part of our overall operating budget, it quickly became apparent that those designated funds would not cover the needs we saw.



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A neighborhood association near the church heard about our efforts and they hold a winter food drive that helps keep our pantry shelves stocked. This Thanksgiving, one of our life groups took it upon themselves to purchase and assemble items for 15 Thanksgiving meals, which we will distribute to those inside and outside our church.

In addition, our "Giving Tree" this year will support families at the Kite Learning Center which meets at Covenant Baptist Church on Dierker Road. This pre-school is devoted to helping New American families integrate and thrive in our community. This population in particular has had to regroup after promises made to them did not materialize. Christians across the city are rallying to help with food and other basic needs.

We are thankful for our dedicated team of volunteers, our generous neighbors, and other faith-filled individuals who take time from their holiday planning and celebrations to remember "the least of these" in our midst.

Matthew 25:40 And the King will answer them, "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me."

**From New Song Community Church in
Reynoldsburg**

Harvest Party Outreach



So we built the wall. And all the wall was joined together to half its height, for the people had a mind to work. - Nehemiah 4:6

Our longest members could not recall another church event where we have had a response like this from the community.

Coming off of a difficult previous year and losing some members, our flock has been in a low spot. On September 14, the Sunday before our ORCN weekend evaluation, in a step of faith, Ashley delivered a message on rebuilding our church from Nehemiah, a new chapter, putting the previous year behind us.

That following week members rallied to Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday evening "wall building" sessions in lieu of their regularly-scheduled homegroups. We focused on Gen Z research, online outreach, visitor hospitality, and planning for our annual harvest party.

Dr. Girgis has been a regular Operation Christmas Child partner for years. When he presented the opportunity to bring a fire truck to our church, we decided to shift the focus



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of our harvest party from a private church fellowship event to a community outreach. You can see the truck here: gototheworld.org. We advertised the event online and on fliers all around.

On October 12 we opened our back lot to the community 4-6PM. At 3:45PM people were already lined up and signing in. Fire truck rides, The River FM, bounce houses, hay rides, face painting, chili contest, hot dogs, s'mores, bonfire, and 277 redeemed tickets for a free Whit's frozen custard from the food truck. We guessed at best 50 people would come from the community; there were over 200. We estimate the total event attendance at 300. The children in one family were crying when it was time to leave; they had so much fun and wanted to stay.

Volunteers from the church manned stations and served the community, from setup, to play time, to meals, to tear down. It was the most well-coordinated and attended event in the last 12 years of our church. The flock was activated in their talents, and we served our community face-to-face. Those who rode the fire truck heard a gospel presentation at the end. A few filled out contact cards after the prayer.

Members realized very quickly that many families who came sincerely needed the free meal that we offered. They were grateful and expressed their thanks as they went through the chili line. We even had to send people out to the grocery for more food.

With this success and learnings, we are planning winter outreaches for January, February, and March. Praise God for his faithfulness.

Update on Local Church Advisors

Each ORCN member church is required to select a set of Advisors to serve in an advisory capacity to the Lead Pastor and the Board of Elders. In order to provide as candid and unbiased feedback as possible, these Advisors are not a part of that local church. One role of these Advisors is an annual assessment of the current health of the church, as well as its plans for the future. We are pleased to report that all member churches have had their first assessment, and have found the Advisors' recommendations to be very helpful.