



SeedStories

from the Christian Evangelistic Assn
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On Mission in the PNW

In the Pacific Northwest (PNW) – in western Oregon and Washington in particular – people truly live in a post-Christian culture. There are *millions* of people in this region who:

- ...have never set foot in a church.
- ...have never read the Bible.
- ...have never spoken personally with a “pastor”.
- ...have heard about Jesus, but have no understanding of who He actually is.

Typically, these people who are unengaged with Christianity are biased against it in unfavorable ways. They believe the bad press believers often get in the media. Some have even been on the receiving end of judgmental attitudes from Christians.

Consequently, our church planters truly are *missionaries* here in the PNW. They can’t simply “preach” the message of Jesus and expect people to respond. They must first learn to understand the distinctive culture of the PNW and then work – diligently and patiently – to build trusting relationships with people who are far from God.

In this issue of Seedstories, we highlight the faithful work of two PNW church-planting “missionaries”

Hannah Grabhorn is a native of southern Kentucky, and the wife of associate pastor, Jon Grabhorn (**Generations Church, Vancouver, WA**). When she relocated to this region, Hannah quickly realized how different Vancouver is from the Bible-belt communities where she grew up. By not making assumptions about people’s spirituality and by listening respectfully to people who are spiritually adrift, she has been effective in drawing teens and adults closer to God.

Dave Atkin (**5|42 Church, Kent, WA**) has been a pastor, missionary, and church planter. As he began connecting with people in south Seattle, Dave realized they needed non-threatening ways to begin exploring the spiritual dimension of life. Since their primary means of communication is social media, he is developing digital tools to arouse curiosity, answer questions, and hopefully, “engage the unengaged”.

We’re grateful for people like Hannah and Dave who have a missionary mindset; a distinctive attitude and approach that is helping them build trust and respect among the unchurched. Please join us in celebrating their efforts and praying for fruit for the Kingdom!

Bruce White
Project Coordinator

From the Bible Belt to the Pacific NW



GENERATIONS CHURCH

Hannah Grabhorn
Generations Church, Vancouver, Washington
Launch:2019

Hannah Grabhorn has been on a wild ride. She met Jon at Kentucky Christian University. They dated, got engaged and then Jon headed west to join the staff of Generations while Hannah finished her degree. Later that year, Jon returned to Kentucky to marry Hannah and then, together, they moved permanently to Vancouver, where – as a volunteer – Hannah dove headlong into the ministry.



A new husband, a new church, and a new home...in a very unchurched corner of the country. How and where would she fit in?

One place is friendships with people outside the church. With a degree in counseling, Hannah is pursuing a Masters of Clinical Mental Health Counseling. As part of her training, she does one-on-one therapy with autistic individuals. Her work brings her into regular contact with people who are far from God. As she began building relationships with her co-workers, Hannah realized just how much they didn't know about God and the church. Some were suspicious about Christians and were not afraid to say so.

Hannah says, "People in the south often 'beat around the bush' in order to be polite. Here, they're much more direct! I quickly realized I had to approach relationships differently. I had to think like a missionary."

When she meets with colleagues, Hannah does a lot of listening. She looks for common ground where she can be affirming. She avoids judgmental statements when they express values that differ from hers. Over time, Hannah is earning trust, respect and the right to be heard. A co-worker recently said, "I didn't expect to meet a Christian who believed as you do, and still would be so kind to me." What a great reminder that *kindness* is a pathway God can use to lead people to Him (Romans 2:4).



Hannah has found a special role within the church as co-leader of Student Ministries. She and Community Life Pastor, Richard Brumley, guide weekly meetings where teens gather for fun, fellowship, and Bible discussions. Here too, Hannah wisely avoids assumptions about what the teens actually know: "Some of our students grew up in church, and some have never been in church before! So even here, I often have to think more like a missionary to help them get closer to Jesus."

Hannah recently had the privilege of baptizing Averie, a young girl she has been investing in for the past couple of years. "It was a joy to see Averie take this step of faith!" Hannah says, "We're in a spiritual battle here. Satan is busy, so we have to

work hard. Yet God is on the move and opening doors!"

We agree that God is at work in **Generations Church**, and we're so grateful for the role Hannah plays as part of this team.

A Bridge between Two Cultures

Dave Atkin
5|42 Church, Kent, Washington
Projected Launch: September 2022



Dave & Brenda Atkin have faced a lot of challenges planting 5|42 church in south Seattle. The biggest impact, of course, was the pandemic. This hampered their ability to build a core team.

Yet, this delay now seems providential. It has required Dave to spend increased time forging connections with the unchurched. Most are young people who are not engaged with church or with Jesus.

Dave's prior work as an overseas missionary paid huge dividends in learning how best to reach people. As he talks with them, Dave realizes that the culture of their world is so vastly different from the culture of the church. Because of this huge gulf, it's hard for any of these people to even *want* to visit a church...let alone understand what's happening should they step into a worship service. So Dave is asking: is there a culturally appropriate way to "engage the unengaged" outside of church, and help close this gap?

The answer might just come through social media, the primary method of communication for so many young people. Dave is working with a team that will use digital tools to answer questions, to build trust, and to help people get curious about Jesus.

They are preparing a series of short, provocative videos to present through apps such as Facebook and Instagram. People can respond to the videos with questions by clicking a "Just Ask Dave" link. As Dave enters into conversations with those who do respond, he will hold tightly to two key values:

Ask the right questions. We'll let the Spirit help us discern what to ask that will draw people out.

Always get permission. For example, Dave often says, "My answer to your question comes from the Bible. May I share that with you?" Getting permission demonstrates respect for the person we're talking with and shows that we care what they think.

At some point, people *will* become curious about Jesus. When that happens, Dave will invite them to participate in digital "discovery sessions". These 8 discussions are built around Jesus' "I Am" statements in the Gospel of John. He uses these as a helpful way for people to personally discover who Jesus is.

This new effort will roll out in the next few weeks, and hopefully, it will prove to be an effective way to draw people to Jesus. As you can see, Dave – as a "missionary" church planter – is trying to build a bridge between two very different cultures. We're excited to see what results!



Christian Evangelistic Association
PO Box 92
Edmonds, WA
98020-0092

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