

# connections

Working Together to Grow the Kingdom

LEADERSHIP NETWORK®

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## Changing the Community and the World

### FAITH IN ACTION

#### FEATURED CHURCH:

Christ Fellowship Church

**LOCATIONS:** Three in West Palm Beach area, South Florida

**ESTABLISHED:** 1984

**SERVICES:** 10 weekly services

**AVERAGE ATTENDANCE:** 10,500

"We've been outreach-minded from the beginning," says Todd Mullins, executive pastor of Christ Fellowship Church. This church is overflowing with the heart of God, reaching out to people—especially children—through time, effort, creativity and funding.

#### HANDING OUT HOPE

In the spring of 2001, Christ Fellowship, a non-denominational multi-site church in Palm Beach County, opened what is looked to as "the standard of excellence in long-term foster care," says Todd.

It's called Place of Hope ([www.placeofhope.com](http://www.placeofhope.com)), and it serves sibling groups who have been torn apart in the foster care system. The program reunites siblings in one of seven homes equipped with full-time parents. Place of Hope (POH) is "joined at the hip" with Christ Fellowship, but was made an independent, not-for-profit, state-licensed child welfare organization.

"It's a beautiful expression of God's love," Todd says. It has been set up intentionally as a model to be used in other locations across the world. In fact, Christ Fellowship launched another POH in India called Places of Hope International, during one of several mission trips there.

A new addition is Villages of Hope. It focuses on children over 18 who have "aged out" of the foster-care system and are facing the world alone. Villages of Hope provides apartment housing and offers essential guidance in job-finding and managing finances.



(top) 25,000 people attended Christ Fellowship Easter services. (right) Kids make themselves at home at their Place of Hope.



#### 'IMPACTING FAITH' MISSION

Christ Fellowship's message of love and assistance for all is visible throughout the congregation and the expansion of the church's campuses.

Currently, three campuses offer 10 services each week. Each campus, linked through a fiber optic connection, has the freedom to begin its service with its own unique style of worship. The campuses start with the same song, which is followed by a live greeting to all campuses before going off-line. Timed to the second, campuses are then linked to hear one sermon at the same time. Internet and podcast services are also available.

Christ Fellowship is looking to expand even more in its attempt to go where the people are. Now, there are as many as 1,000 people commuting at least 30 minutes from two counties to the north to attend weekly services. Christ Fellowship has plans to launch a

campus in that area in spring 2007. Church members there are already holding small-group gatherings to nourish the outreach mind-set.

The church has a full plate, with all of its outreach programs and goals for growth. Todd says the leadership has learned, as a member of Leadership Network's Multi-Site Churches Leadership Community, that the church needs to revamp its internal structure in order to keep all of the staff connected.

## OPERATING AS A MULTI-SITE ORGANIZATION CAN BE AN EXPENSIVE AND COMPLICATED WAY TO RUN A CHURCH, BUT 'THE RETURN IN SOULS COMING TO KNOW JESUS CHRIST IS PRICELESS.'

Although Todd says operating as a multi-site organization can be an expensive and complicated way to run a church, he affirms "the return in souls coming to know Jesus Christ is priceless."

And the church is receiving quite a rate of return! Recent surveys showed that, in its new Wellington/Royal Palm location, 50 percent of the campus is new to Christ Fellowship and of those, "most are new to church."

### WHAT LEADERSHIP NETWORK MEANS TO ME

Leadership Network is a great investment for anyone going multi-site ... it turned out to be one of the best resources for growth. I would strongly recommend it to any church that is starting the journey of multi-siting and encourage them to partner up with other churches. We learned so much from LifeChurch.tv [based in Oklahoma]. I remember walking away from the meeting [when LifeChurch.tv spoke] and thinking, 'Well, what we learned right there just made it all worth it.'



—Todd Mullins, Executive Pastor, Christ Fellowship Church

## SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

*Christ Fellowship offers unique service options: two Spanish-language services, one young-adult service, two services with signing for the deaf, and a special option for parents of special-needs children.*



Children participate in horse therapy, at Christ Fellowship's on-site stables.

*For five years, the church has provided "special-needs*

*shadows." These educated volunteers team up with special-needs kids so their parents can go to church. Each child has the same shadow each week for the same service to assist in relationship development.*

*Shadows offer one-on-one attention and teaching. Many times, this program affords parents of special-needs children their first opportunity to attend and get involved in church on a regular basis. Special-needs shadows operate from the church's Special Need Ministry, which also offers art, music and horse-riding therapy during its all-day Saturday events.*

### WORLDWIDE RELATIONSHIPS

In addition to local outreach, Christ Fellowship arranges mission trips around the U.S. and the world. The 2006 destinations included Costa Rica, Bolivia, Peru, the Bahamas, New York and Mississippi. Church members often travel back to locations over and over to establish strong relationships for a more powerful, long-term impact. Such relationships have been vital in India where Christ Fellowship has helped to set up approximately 2,000 churches.

The church is growing, and Todd says it's because "people come and see the tangible expressions of God's love through the church."

Christ Fellowship has put the needs of others ahead of their own. Outreach is always at the forefront of the church's ministry. As a result, the community has taken notice and is drawn to the love and message of Jesus Christ. **LN**