

Reaching Outdoorsmen through Church Planting

The Moore family, Jeff and his wife Kim, along with their three children, Jordan, Kaelyn, and Kerrigan love the outdoors. However, their love for church planting is even greater. The combination of these two passions has led the Moore family to begin, The Gathering @ The Lodge, a new church plant in the Muskingum Valley Association. On February 4, 2008, Jeff and Kim again became fulltime church planters with hearts for outdoors men and women and a passion for reaching them for Christ.

The Moore family came to Ohio during the summer of 2003 as NAMB Nehemiah church planters and began a work in Thornville, Ohio. That work, New Life Baptist Church, continues to be a light in the communities where the tri-counties of Perry, Licking, and Fairfield come together. New Life has since constituted and is active in the Muskingum Valley Association and regularly gives to the Cooperative Program and other Southern Baptist Missions programs. While at New Life, the Moore's connected with several families through their passion for the outdoors. Jeff says, "Our lifestyle of being an outdoors family allowed us to have a common connection with the people around the Thornville area. We felt God calling us to take that connectivity to the next level."

Jeff's vision to plant, The Gathering @ The Lodge, has been developing over the last couple of years; however, the spark that propelled him into action took place in the summer of 2007. Jeff writes, "I had been praying about how our church, New Life, could sponsor a new church plant for outdoorsmen. I had even prayed for God to bring us a church planter. Little did I know that He was preparing me to be the planter. During that summer, I was compelled to attend an outdoor conference in Springfield, Ohio hosted by Gerry Caillouet of God's Great Outdoors. I almost didn't go due to scheduling conflicts and the busyness of the summer activities, but there was something that kept drawing me to attend. Shortly after the conference, I began to take a look at outdoor church planting in other states, but kept feeling drawn to remain here in Ohio. The thought of planting an outdoor church in our own Muskingum Valley Association never occurred to me until I began to look at the top counties for deer and turkey hunting within our state. I was amazed to find that 9 of the top 11 Ohio counties for deer hunting and 9 of the top 12 Ohio counties for turkey hunting are located in our own association of churches. It was like God said to my heart, 'Look around. Here they are. Here you are. Can't you see the need right here in Southeast Ohio? Now, get out there, connect with them, and tell them about Jesus.'"

Mission work has always been a part of Jeff's life. Even at an early age, Jeff's parents were leaders of a church plant in the Lake Wappapello area of Southeast Missouri. Jeff says, "My whole life has been about doing missions, not just giving money to missionaries. As I have grown older, I see the many needs much clearer. I know how God has shaped me and I recognize how the passions that He has given me can be used for His glory. My family has made a life commitment to missions. Not only do we consider ourselves full-time missionaries, but we have committed to trading our summer vacation every year for a family mission trip. This family does just about everything together. Our kids are just as committed to missions as Kim and I are. That includes outdoor ministry and starting this church."

Jeff's prayer is that The Gathering @ The Lodge is not just one single church plant. "My desire is for a church planting movement to sweep across our association and state of Ohio. We will never reach our goal of 2020 churches by the year 2020 if one church planter only plants one church. My vision for The Gathering @ The Lodge is that bible studies or 'outposts' are begun in various places. There may be four, five, even six or seven going on at the same time. These outposts will meet weekly in homes, campgrounds, businesses, or schools. Building relationships through common connections of the outdoors along with fellowship and spiritual growth will be the focus of the outposts. The outpost groups will then gather together monthly or even bi-weekly at a central location called, The Lodge. These celebration services will include testimonies, worship, and equipping. It will be a time to refuel and refit to go back out into the field. My continued prayer is that each outpost would grow and reproduce; becoming a multi-church planting movement."

Please continue to pray for the Moore family as they seek to reach outdoor men and women by 'Outfitting souls with the warmth of God's love.'

Jeff is available to speak or share his testimony at outdoor events or wild game dinners. He is also willing to share with local churches in outdoor conferences, which may include topics like, Beginning An Effective Outdoor Ministry in Your Church, Focusing on the Outdoor Family, Having a Successful Wild Game Dinner, and/or Connecting With Outdoorsmen Through Servant Evangelism.

This new church is sponsored by the Muskingham Valley Baptist Association, Where Bob Beike is Associational Missionary, The State Convention of Baptist in Ohio as well as other partnering churches.

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