

# connections

Working Together to Grow the Kingdom

LEADERSHIP NETWORK®

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## The Church Next Door

### BECOMING A GREAT NEIGHBOR

#### FEATURED CHURCH:

New Song Community Church

#### LOCATION:

Oceanside, California

**ESTABLISHED:** 1992

**SERVICES:** 3 weekend services

**AVERAGE ATTENDANCE:** 900

**N**ew Song Community Church in Oceanside, California, has a clear mission: to help unchurched people become devoted followers of Christ. As a member of Leadership Network's Externally Focused Churches Leadership Community, New Song charges its members to reach out to meet the needs of those not yet inside the family of faith.

New Song wants to become "the church next door" to its community. Their goal is to touch every home and family in their area with the love of Christ by being a great neighbor.

#### THE YOUNGEST NEIGHBORS

Being a good neighbor requires getting to know the people around you. Only when you understand their needs can you provide the help they truly desire. New Song has recently gotten to know its neighborhood school children. When the church learned that area children were lacking basic school supplies, New Song got involved.

Bernie Snyder, a member of New Song since it first opened its doors in 1992, headed up the school supply

project. She decided to focus on a local school with undeniable needs.

Many of the children were new to this country and struggled with English. Some lived in multi-family homes where it was hard to find the space or privacy to study. Most lived below the poverty line. To these students, the basics that we all take for granted were often unattainable.

"Many of these kids were coming to school without even a pencil," Bernie says. "They didn't have money for any school supplies."



Bernie Snyder and her granddaughter, Jessica, are thankful for the school supplies donated by church members.

Bernie knew her church could help fill those needs. She asked for anything and everything students could use, from pens, paper and markers to books, folders and backpacks. The items could be new or gently used.

New Song's members answered Bernie's call for help. Boxes and boxes of items were donated. When several women from the church took the items to the school office, the staffers couldn't believe their eyes.

The staff's genuine gratitude was thanks enough, and Bernie didn't expect to hear anything else from the school. But a few weeks later, a large envelope arrived, filled with heartfelt letters from the children.

From pictures drawn by kindergartners to letters carefully penned by sixth graders, the students poured out their thanks. One little girl said, "Thank you for the crayons. I can draw pretty pictures again." Another student wrote, "This is like the best Christmas I ever had." Some students even asked if the church would please pray for them.

### SOME STUDENTS EVEN ASKED IF THE CHURCH WOULD PLEASE PRAY FOR THEM.

Bernie was moved by the letters and shared several of them in that week's worship service. The congregation was touched. It was soon decided that the school supply roundup would become an annual event.

#### LOAVES AND FISHES

New Song's pastor challenges members to push themselves. One Sunday, Pastor Hal Seed asked for

### WHAT LEADERSHIP NETWORK MEANS TO ME

New Song had been developing the idea of becoming "The Church Next Door" for some time when Leadership Network asked us to join the Externally Focused Churches Leadership Community. I saw this as an opportunity to accelerate our learning—and I was right! Even before our first meeting, Leadership Network fed me information about what other churches around the country were doing to transform their cities. And in our first meeting, we were introduced to other churches wanting to do similar things. Those churches helped us make strides toward our mission that would have taken us years to learn on our own. The shared learning and the discipline of setting concrete six-month goals every time we met have helped keep us on track with our "Next Door" focus.

—Hal Seed, Pastor, New Song Community Church



**"New Song saved my life. I was on a bad path when I received a flyer about a new church that was forming. I went to New Song on its first week. There is so much love here.**

**There is so much community. This church is my family. Here, you feel the presence of God."**

—Bernie Snyder,  
Nursery Department  
Leader, New Song  
Community Church



Bernie sells patriotic items to fund free meals for local military families.

100 people to come to the stage for a new project. He asked for risk-takers. Bernie says she isn't a risk-taker. Not by a long shot. But she felt a calling to get out of her chair to fill one of the spots. "I think the Holy Spirit pushed me out of my seat!" Bernie says.

Pastor Hal handed everyone on stage a \$100 bill, a total of \$10,000, with the instructions to invest it for good and for God. They couldn't give it back to the church.

Bernie prayed about the best way to use her money. And divine inspiration struck. She took her \$100 and bought inexpensive patriotic items, such as bookmarks, water bottles and lapel pins.

She set up a patriotic themed table at the church to sell the items at double their cost, along with donated baked goods. When the sale was over, Bernie's \$100 had grown into \$300.

With the money, Bernie decided to help the families of deployed Marines at nearby Camp Pendleton who were facing hard times, both emotionally and financially. To feed both their bodies and souls, Bernie worked with a local restaurant to award meal gift cards to the families. She convinced the restaurant to throw in some extras, so her \$300 went even further.

Camp Pendleton randomly selects families each week to enjoy a free meal together. Doesn't this story sound familiar? Jesus fed the multitude with a few loaves and fishes. New Song did the same with a little seed money, God's inspiration and many hearts full of love. **LN**