

# The Project So L Report

*Episode 5: August 2021*



Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ!

## Challenging Times

It has been quite a while since we've updated you. We're sorry for that. We had unfortunate news to report, and we procrastinated. Please forgive us and have grace for us in our late update.

We started the year off on an emotional note, as the Nenns said goodbye to The King's Table. They are the smaller family who moved down to plant the church with us and the Andersens. It was a struggle on several levels, and we now recognize how we all could have loved and served each other better in the difficult process of moving to a new place to plant a church, especially during COVID. We are sad to have lost the Nenns' participation in our church, but we hear they are thriving in their new church home and creating social opportunities in their neighborhood. And for that we rejoice!

It's also been slower than we'd like on the neighbor front this year. Several neighbors declined our invitation to come over for dinner during the winter and spring months. And then this summer, Jeff and John got COVID – we think John brought it home from camp – which turned a big chunk of summer into quarantine. But there were a few households who took us up on our offers, and interactions have picked up in the summer (when we weren't traveling or sequestered due to illness). Here are some highlights...

## Catching you up on All the Things...

**February:** Faith hosted a Galentine's party, which wasn't a church event per se, but several neighbors came to that, as well as some new friends of Kayla's. February also kicked off Lenten season, during which Kayla and Jeff led our church in how to practice Lent meaningfully. Kayla came from a reformed church and she encouraged us in how to experience Lent in a more personal way with the Lord. It was wonderful!

**March:** Faith's mom passed away right after her parents moved to Virginia, which was very sad. When the Block's returned from Virginia it was the day before Palm Sunday. Michele greeted us at our home with more flowers than we could count, a fridge stocked with food, breakfast goodies, and dinner in the crockpot. We felt so loved! Then, on Palm Sunday, we found out that we were going to have our very first real "guests" at Sunday Morning Gathering (SMG)—a neighbor and her friend. This neighbor connected Jeff with this friend – a middle-aged man who really needed a good role model. Our church had gone to his mobile home in February to rake leaves and help prepare it for sale. And over time, Jeff met with him regularly while he was recovering from surgery and after he returned home, attempting to be a friend to him and disciple him. Unfortunately, it has been difficult over time to meet regularly with him due to the significant life challenges he faces. Our neighbor came to SMG twice, and her friend came several more times, but they no longer attend. We do continue to interact with this neighbor (a self-proclaimed atheist) often and to pray for her and her friend.

**Holy Week** was extremely meaningful this year. Jeff led us in foot washing on Maundy Thursday. We also assembled little Easter baskets with scripture, candy, plastic eggs and other goodies, including an invitation to our Easter Sunday service and Fellowship Feast. These were distributed to our neighbors and to the residents of the local senior living center, Parkway Gardens. We celebrated Good Friday by walking the Stations of the Cross at a local Catholic church. Holy Saturday, the Andersen's taught us how to do Pysanky eggs, and we spent much of the day together. Sunday was the big day, of course. Our various Lenten fasts came to an end as we celebrated the resurrection of Jesus. Our atheist neighbor came to SMG and her husband joined her for Fellowship Feast on Easter Sunday. Jeff's parents started coming regularly to SMG too after our return from Virginia.

Some pictures from Holy Week...



**April:** We ordered 250 potted annuals from a local nursery, created little notes to stick into the flowerpots that talked about how spring reminds us of new life in Christ, and distributed them to a nearby mobile home neighborhood, townhomes, and single-family homes in our neighborhood. We met lots of folks we'd like to get to know from the mobile home park and townhomes, which gave us hope for future relationships. We also conducted our first church service the weekend after Easter for Parkway Gardens. Faith fell in love with an older gentleman there and has been trying to visit him regularly. We have since conducted 2 more services for their residents and a hymn sing for the memory care facility associated with them. Michele and Kayla have been leading worship, and all our hearts have refreshed each time we meet! One resident at the memory care facility threatened to hunt us down if we didn't return again. LOL.



**May:** One of our neighbors returned from a six-month deployment to the UAE. The Andersen's had been babysitting his cat since October, and we've checked on the house a time or two. The Andersen's made a "Welcome Home" sign on a posterboard that everyone signed. Balloons and flowers and the sign were placed in his kitchen, and he and his girlfriend were really blessed by that. We hosted a driveway BBQ for Memorial Day and invited the memorable folks we met from the townhomes and mobile home park when distributing flowers. After many commitments to come, none of them showed, which was disappointing. We had probably distributed 50 invitations total, but only 5 neighbors attended. However, we had a great time with them, first around the tables eating BBQ and then around a bonfire pit. While making s'mores, a neighbor family we hadn't met came down our cul-de-sac on a walk, so we invited them to make some s'mores with us. They did, and they visited for probably 30 minutes. The kids had a blast, and we hope to interact with them again. In total, the experience taught us that it's probably time to move away from mass invites when interacting with our neighbors.

# Love One Another

**Summer:** Speaking of changing strategies, the Andersens began challenging us this past spring to focus more on our relationships together as a launch team. We hit the ground running when we moved down here last year, and we got to know the names of more neighbors in three months than we thought possible. We held driveway BBQ's every month, did an ice cream giveaway, went Christmas caroling, distributed Christmas cookies, Easter baskets and spring flowers, celebrated Holy Week with gusto, etc. Everyone feels Jeff has done an incredible job with marketing strategies and event planning. The Andersens too have blessed their neighborhood with poinsettia distribution, lanterns on Christmas Eve, and lilies at Easter, and more. But particularly Jeff's focus on missional tasks may have worn out our fellow church planters. If that weren't enough, COVID has made it difficult for the Andersens to make their own relational connections outside of The King's Table. The last year has been filled with a mix of hurt and hope for Andersens; please remember them in your prayers.

Additionally, Jeff has struggled with a severe sense of loneliness, which is not unique to church planters. He has the support of the EFCA, especially the Central district, and meets occasionally with district church planting leaders. He also has participated in a virtual church planting cohort for the last year, and meets regularly with one counselor and another mentor. But, since we are not a traditional model church, Jeff still feels out of place in the cohort and like the "crazy uncle" in conversations with other pastors. We have been praying for ministry partners, which is vital for our church growth. But, in the end, despite our many efforts in the past year, we lost a ministry family, and our remaining family is beckoning us to pause on the doings and invest in the beings and the knowings. Jeff and I are so task-oriented that this shift is taking some adjustment. So, please pray for us all—including the kids (JJ, Alex, John, and Dylan). Many are looking for work and for good Christian friends in the area.

We are certain that the work God is doing in us here in Southern Illinois couldn't have been done in Wauconda. It required that we do the crazy things – moving to an unknown place, the Andersens' living with us, Bob's having no job – although praise the Lord, he finally got a great job July 6th which seems to be a perfect fit for him! – and working to build a very non-traditional church ... to say nothing of doing that during a global pandemic. And God has used / is using all those (crazy!) things to unravel us and put us in a place of dire dependence upon Him and on each other. We are learning to wait, to trust, to love, to know and be known. Kayla has been teaching the group about our diverse personalities (with the Enneagram). Michele and Faith are learning about soul care and contemplative prayer, and we are hoping and praying for our men and our boys to find comfort in the Lord, too, and grace to rejoice in the struggle.

## Please pray!

Please join us in praying for our families... that we would be filled to overflowing with hope and joy that spills over into the lives of everyone around us. Jesus said that they will know us by our love for one another (John 13:35). We pray for unity, sacrificial love, and a supernatural delight in one another that produces an environment for us all to use our gifts and thrive where God has planted us ... together. And ultimately, we pray that the love we have for one another draws others to our beautiful Savior, Jesus.

Thank you for all your prayers and support. Come visit us sometime!

Signup for these reports at [report.projectsoil.net/signup](https://report.projectsoil.net/signup), and read more about our journey on [our team's blog](#). And visit our church's website: [TheKingsTable.Church](https://TheKingsTable.Church). You might be particularly interested in our new [What is Church?](#) Page.

## Some Other Pics We Thought You'd Like

Friends came to visit, which was such a blessing to us...



Our new sign that we put out by the street on Sundays...



Wieners, sleeping in their traditional place every Sunday morning...

