

PARISH HOUSE

Newmarket Church of Christ



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CASTING THE SEED: MATTHEW 13

Nathan Pickard

I recently walked a field that I had planted with oats and winter rye. I planted this field in early August with an expectation that the crops I planted would grow. A few weeks later I walked the field and realized only a few seeds were growing. It was a crop failure. Too many variables worked against us. With winter approaching and needing crops to be established before the snow sets in, my dad quickly disc the field and I planted more seed. Now we hope for rain and better conditions. Maybe this time the seeds will germinate and grow a harvest.

Wanted . . .

Parish House Minister

The Newmarket Church of Christ has intentionally lived with her neighbours for the past 15+ years. We are now looking for a Parish House minister who will (but not limited to):

- Build upon and strengthen the established ministries and friendships within the neighbourhood,
- Live with and for our neighbours
- Continue to help us live deeper into the mission of God

Those interested to apply and/or to seek more information, please contact newmarketcofc@gmail.com.

A full job description can be found at:
<https://www.newmarketchurchofchrist.ca/parish-house>

Significant Relational Groups (SRG)

We have embarked on a journey as a Christian faith community to build *significant relational groups*. This is not another program or another task to add to our list of responsibilities, but an intentional way of being together.

We live in relationships; we live in a variety of relational groups. These relational groups are not just centered around work, sports, or hobbies, but around the ongoing redemptive work of God in our midst. As we discern together the work of God in our midst, we're beginning to pay greater attention to who we are living into relationships with.

As I think who we live into relationships with:

- Youth from the neighborhood
- Residences of apartments and condos
- Longtime members and new members
- Various organizations and individuals partnering in various capacities
- Schools



God calls us into community--into relationships. We are not isolated silos; we are a community of people who are being brought together on account of God's redemptive work. And what have we noticed? Partnerships, energy, hope, growth, answered prayers.

Casting the Seed, Cont'd

Several years ago our congregation started a Summer Camp. The families we were becoming friends with told us that many kids in the neighbourhood couldn't afford a summer camp experience. And so with the help of our neighbours, we started a summer camp.

Fast forward several years. The funeral home calls and says there is a family who has just faced a tragic death and they are wondering if we could help them face this difficult chapter. Before I could answer, the funeral director said, "*The sister's children were a part of your summer camp for many years.*" It wasn't long after this that I met the family and we walked together through a service honoring the deceased praying that they could walk this path with God's grace and mercy.

After the service I stood outside the funeral home with the director. We were reflecting upon the funeral service and I was asked, *How did you get involved in this family's life?* Without thinking, I told a story of a reckless farmer who went out to cast some seed. The reckless farmer threw out the seeds, not always on fertile soil. Some fell on rocky ground. Some fell in the thorn bushes. Some fell along the path. Some fell on fertile soil.

When I finished telling the story, the funeral director looked at me and said, "*What the hell does that have to do with this family?*" I laughed. I laughed really hard. We both laughed. He thought I had lost my mind. I explained to him that one day our church walked across the street and met our neighbours. And when this happened, we became the reckless farmer casting out the seeds of the kingdom. We threw all kinds of seeds on the ground. We didn't know which seeds would grow nor did we know which seeds would land on rocky ground, thorns, pathways or fertile ground. We just became the reckless farmer casting out the seeds of the kingdom.

Now years later, in the midst of a tragedy, that family remembered how we loved the children, how we fed our neighbours, how we made the kids laugh, how we worked together in the creation of a summer camp. It took several years, but suddenly when the darkest night of their lives arrived, the family had enough trust for us to walk alongside them in death.

I've been thinking about this. Sure, the biblical exegetes among us might have some good critiques about how I am using this story. But bear with me . . . our lives are shaped by a Scriptural imagination. The stories of Scripture shape our imagination in very different ways than the stories of redemptive violence, individualism, selfishness, consumerism. I'm not trying to argue for a specific exegetical reading of Matthew 13. I'm trying to see how Matthew 13 might shape our imaginations of living with and for our neighbours. As we live with and for our neighbours, we are scattering the seeds of the kingdom.



Yes, some seeds we scatter will not grow. Wrong path. Wrong soil. Too many thorns. Maybe it's the wrong season. But then, surprisingly, it might just be that the seeds we scatter are sitting dormant and when the right time arrives, those seeds begin to germinate.

My suspicion is that too many churches are hoping for a harvest when in fact they haven't spent years planting the seeds. Too many churches are hoping and praying for the harvest, when in fact they haven't thrown a single seed of the kingdom into the neighbourhoods, streets, and schools that are surrounding our churches. Is there ever going to be a harvest if no one is planting the seeds of the kingdom?

We have a community garden. We provide food for the schools to feed the children who arrive hungry. We host a neighbourhood meal. We share a monthly lunch with 280 Davis Drive. We partnered with the Town so a parkette could be built at the front of the church. We partner with friends to help provide a Christmas for families who are struggling. This is our way of casting the seeds of the kingdom. We don't know what these seeds will do; we don't always know how these seeds will grow nor do we always know what kind of soil were scattering the seed on—we just trust that the seeds we scatter will one day produce a harvest.

So I ask, what seeds are your churches scattering today that will, one day by God's mercy, become a harvest?

The Parkette

It's likely that when the next issue of the newsletter arrives, the Parkette will be completed, but possibly buried in snow. So here are a few pictures of the bike trail and parkette the Town of Newmarket is building beside the church property



"To be most effective in bringing about change in a community or a neighborhood, it helps if you live there."

Larry James, *The Wealth of the poor*

**NEWMARKET
CHURCH OF
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God through friendship
with the neighbourhood

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