

You never know what's going to happen with Kesh 'Oved Faith Ministries

What makes a new church unique? How can Disciples do church the new way?

The answers are as diverse as the congregations in formation across the [Christian Church \(Disciples of Christ\) in the United States and Canada](#).

But one thing is common: launching a new place of worship is difficult. It's especially difficult in the middle of a global health crisis, when gathering in an intimate space with fellow congregants is made next to impossible. So why would someone take this leap of faith?

As a military spouse who's been previously stationed overseas, Pastor Jennifer Moreno has a personal understanding into life away from one's faith community. She started [Kesh 'Oved Faith Ministries](#) during the COVID-19 pandemic to not only provide worship services for families like hers, but to help other congregations connect with one another through technology, such as pre-recorded videos and [Facebook Live](#). Pastor Jenn hopes that her emerging collective will be an example to others of how to keep in touch with members located out of town, out of state, or even across the world.

"It's building-less and borderless," she says in a recent video call with [New Church Ministry](#), "because we need that right now even more than ever."

Kesh 'Oved Faith Ministries also strives to create a sense of belonging for those who have become socially isolated during the past year. After an interruption from the household's pet parrot Yoshi, whom Pastor Jenn refers to as her associate pastor, she stresses that we have to recognize mental illness and how COVID-19 has exacerbated it, particularly through the restriction of outdoor hobbies and pastimes that would contribute to better mental health.

"It's really important that we check in on each other," Pastor Jenn says. "And make sure that we're all okay."

The people of Kesh 'Oved, which is Hebrew for 'lost sheep,' do just that in Zoom meetings called BYOBB (Bring Your Own Bible and Beverage), where they drink coffee and talk about what's going on, whether they're joining from South Korea, Japan, or Germany. If they do happen to be in Pastor Jenn's town of Riverview, Florida, and it's safe to do so, members will eat a meal with each other.

"We all connect," she emphasizes, "and ensure that we have relationship with one another."

Pastor Jenn hasn't been with her own parents, who live in Amarillo, Texas, because they are elderly, homebound, and she doesn't want them, nor her, to get sick.

While Kesh 'Oved is a virtual church plant, she makes sure that local residents become familiar with it, too. Pastor Jenn's car is adorned with a chalice and as a Door Dash driver, she puts her business card in with every meal that she delivers, every load of groceries that she does through Walmart.

"I do that because I want people to know we're here," Kesh 'Oved's minister shares, "and that we give of ourselves, time, and talents to help those that can't get out right now."

For Pastor Jenn, her work in ministry is about more than just bringing together Riverview's Disciples. It's about promoting the denomination's mission and vision of being a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world. After all, she sees the Church as a safe space for her – the region provided her support during the launch process and New Church Ministry provided her educational opportunities through [Leadership Academy](#).

"When everything's falling apart and it doesn't look like it's going right, New Church Ministry's there," Pastor Jenn says. "Knowing that we have such a good foundation, it's the perfect time for everybody to try to plant something new."

And she doesn't just mean new churches. Pastor Jenn believes that throughout our lives, we've all been given seeds of wisdom, love, grace, and mercy. When somebody took us to church as a child, the seed of prayer was planted, helping us grow and mature into who we are today. To her, everyone has the chance to spread the seeds we've received through the people that we come in contact with every day, even complete strangers. If someone's struggling, we can plant a seed of compassion by giving them a smile or expressing our gratitude for their service. The Holy Spirit will water that seed throughout the day, which will germinate, and grow into something fresh. But there's a difference between a positive seed like that, and a negative one, and we have a choice to make between which one we scatter. Pastor Jenn makes the case for treating workers in the service industry with more care, say if they got a customer's order incorrect or delivered it to the wrong address.

"We need positivity," she says. "We need to know that we're all in this together."

Throughout our call with Pastor Jenn, she spoke with a calm self-assurance, even when the doorbell was ringing in the background or her dog barked. When we asked her where this confidence comes from, Pastor Jenn said it was due to her work as a pastor at another congregation in Winter Haven, Fla., and the experience she gained as a leader for Family Readiness groups within the army. She also credits the support she's received from friends, one of whom serves on Pastor Jenn's team as the Music and Worship Director, and the owner of [Ms. T's Soaps N Such](#), who was inspired to make different colored bars of soap for Kesh 'Oved, all in the shape of sheep. (Kesh 'Oved's catchphrase is "Finding lost sheep everywhere!")

"We are all looking for comfort and security," she says. "I started Kesh 'Oved so that anybody could reach me at any time and know that they're not alone."

Pastor Jenn then asks her daughter, who had just recently returned from school, to get her a "Lamby." When she returns, Pastor Jenn holds up a rainbow lamb. On the bottom of the soap it says, "God loves

ewe, no matter what.” People who have become regulars of the church receive a “Lamby” from her that has been prayed over. This way they know that they are loved, they are thought of, they’re missed.

“No matter how dirty we are,” says Pastor Jenn. “Jesus Christ cleans us and has made us clean for God.”

And she wants Disciples to know that they can be supporters of the new church movement too. Money is an important issue in church planting. Often, church leaders initially operate with little to no funds. All of the startup costs that Pastor Jenn has spent so far have come out of her own personal finances, despite her husband’s misgivings, because she felt the need to do so.

“Give cheerfully, because when you do so, you’re not just touching the general church or region,” Pastor Jenn says. “You’re touching all of those new churches.”

As we wrap up our conversation, we ask what the future holds for Kesh ‘Oved.

“You never know what you’re going to get,” laughs Pastor Jenn. “Whether it’s the bird landing on my head, the dog barking, or my kid running through.”

On a serious note, a nearby Colombian café has offered her the use of their facilities for Bible studies and different kinds of worship services. Pastor Jenn looks forward to that, and to watching her baby, as she calls Kesh ‘Oved, flourish.

“If you take that leap of faith and do what God is calling you to do,” she concludes, “the blessings will overflow.”

You can support new faith communities like Pastor Jenn’s by making a gift to the [Pentecost Offering](#), collected in most congregations on May 16 and May 23. Half of the gifts go to New Church Ministry to train, equip, assist and multiply leaders, and the other half stays in regional ministries to support local new church development.