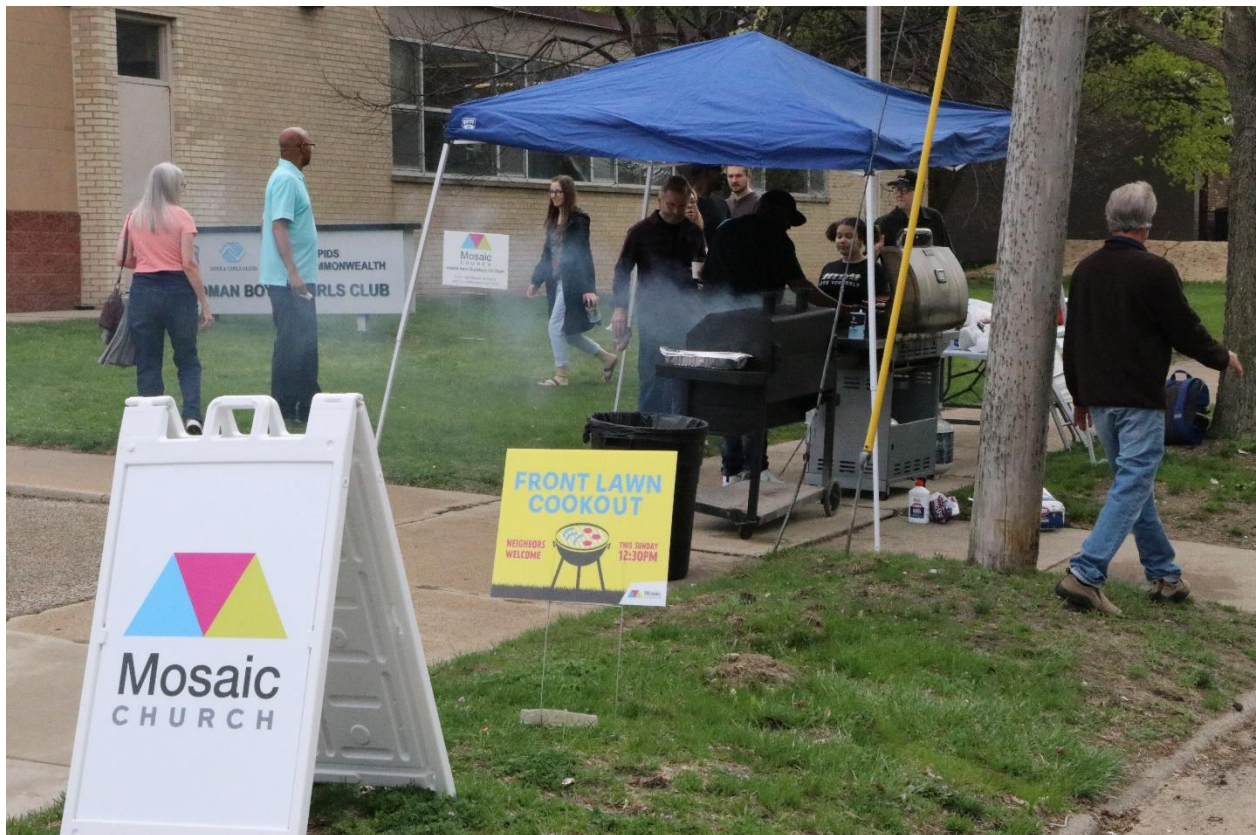


June 2023

Build Your Church!

Pastor Noah Filipiak is a dear friend and brother in Christ who answered God's call to plant another church, distinctly unique, and needed in Grand Rapids, Michigan. I enjoyed the privilege of worshipping with them several times before they officially launched on Easter Sunday, 2022, and a few times after that. It was such a privilege to worship with them on their first anniversary in 2023. I brought my camera to capture images of their excitement and joy! I invited Pastor Noah to share the story of Mosaic Church.

Mosaic Church is a new church plant meeting at the Seidman Boys & Girls Club in SE Grand Rapids. We celebrated our one-year anniversary on April 16th and what a year it's been.



You might be wondering why does Grand Rapids, land-of-a-million-churches, need another church? While I'm a big fan of church planting in any context as one of the most effective ways of reaching lost people with the gospel and getting disconnected people back into church, I'm also very passionate about planting multi-ethnic churches. I will never knock someone in an ethnic minority wanting to attend a church that is predominantly or even exclusively made up of their ethnic group, be it African-American, Hispanic, or any refugee or immigrant ethnic group. Those in ethnic minorities have to assimilate to white culture everywhere they go during the week like work, school, or the shopping mall. Ethnic churches are crucial places of refuge. But it's not simply a matter of "Well, people want to worship the way they want to worship, so they will attend homogenous churches." The reason it's not that simple is because of our history as a nation.

When African-Americans were freed from slavery and attempted to join American (white) society, they were rejected at every turn, including the church. The reason there are black churches, denominations, and seminaries is because white Christians did not allow black people to join theirs. Racism left black Christians with no other choice but to start their own churches. If it weren't for the sin of racism, we would not have the segregated churches we have become accustomed to today.



One of the many problems with segregation has always been the inequity that has accompanied it. Did you know that the net worth of a white household is 10x higher than the net worth of a black household in the United States? This is because of the systemically racist structures that have deprived black Americans of access and opportunity to resources throughout our nation's history. The white church has rarely stood up to this inequity and most often, has been a primary contributor and beneficiary of it. These are truths we have to look in the eye if we take Scripture's call for sin to be redeemed and reconciled seriously. God not only wants reconciliation in heaven (Revelation 7:9), he wants it "on earth as it is heaven" (Matthew 6:10).



I not only believe it's wonderful to have a Revelation 7:9-type worship service where diverse ethnic groups are represented, but more than that, I believe it is an essential mandate of Scripture that we seek justice in our land (Micah 6:6-8, Amos 5:21-24, Isaiah 1:11-17, Matthew 23:23). We need to teach on racial justice and model solutions in our churches that bring about racial equity. Not all churches can be multi-ethnic, but every church needs to teach biblical justice as a part of the standard discipleship of an American Christian. Every white church also needs to ask themselves if their church is hospitable to black people, Hispanic people, and other ethnic groups. Some of this is in music style, etc., but in my experience as a white pastor, the majority of it is in the understanding of white privilege and racial inequity and being able to honestly acknowledge the experiences of oppression that racial minorities face on a daily basis. Because most white churches are unwilling to acknowledge these realities in their churches, their communities aren't safe places for people of color to feel comfortable sharing their authentic selves.

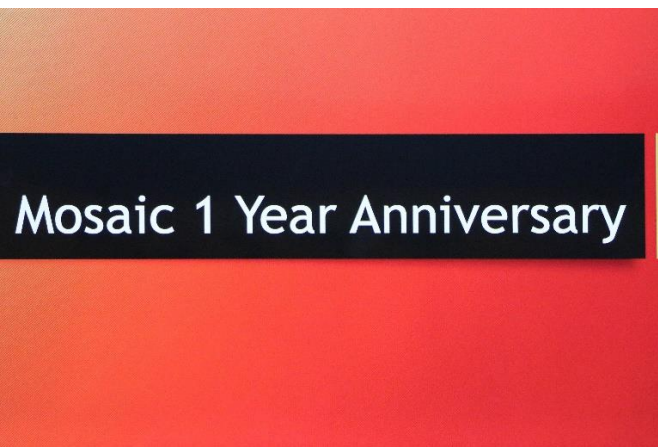


Coinciding with the creation of Mosaic, I also founded New Humanity, a multi-ethnic church planting network focused on urban community development. Our team consists of myself and three black pastors from urban Grand Rapids, all pastoring multi-ethnic churches themselves. The best way to have a multi-ethnic church is to start one from scratch, with multi-ethnicity and antiracism baked into the missional DNA of the church. This is much more effective than fighting the many battles of trying to transition a homogenous church into a multi-ethnic one (something I've also experienced). Half of New Humanity's funds go to hiring multi-ethnic staff for its church plants. The other half go to urban community development initiatives for the church plant's congregation and neighborhood, such as interest-free startup and vitality loans for business owners of color. Mosaic is the first church plant out of New Humanity and we look forward to planting more in nearby city centers as the Lord leads and provides. Mosaic is also a church plant of the Evangelical Covenant Church denomination. I love the ECC because they teach and model racial righteousness as a core part of their DNA, while still holding fast to the gospel and Scripture.



We have seen twenty people make decisions to start a relationship with Jesus over the past year and have performed ten baptisms. We have built trust at the Boys & Girls Club and are seeing a growing number of kids and parents visiting and joining Mosaic. We do six epic cookouts a year in the front lawn of the Boys & Girls Club for lunch after church and invite our neighbors to join us. We are gaining a reputation in the neighborhood for our cookouts, get huge crowds, and have seen several of our salvations and baptisms come directly from these feasts. We are at Garfield Park all summer long on Thursday evenings eating pizza, doing sports and activities, and sharing the gospel with kids and teens. We had 30-70 kids per week last summer and had around 150 different youth who attended.







Build Your Church
Build Your Church
Build it from the ground up
It's Your Church





I appreciate John giving me a chance to highlight what we are doing at Mosaic Church. My aim in this newsletter is not to shove any of this down your throat or argue you into anything. I can tell you that doing multi-ethnic, antiracist ministry is the most beautiful, fulfilling thing in the world to me. I used to try to force-feed this to people, but that is a real waste of energy for all involved. Now I just try to do it, knowing the food smells great and tastes great. We always leave an empty seat at the table for anyone who wants to join in this adventure, pile the food up high, and allow the aroma of God at work to do the rest.

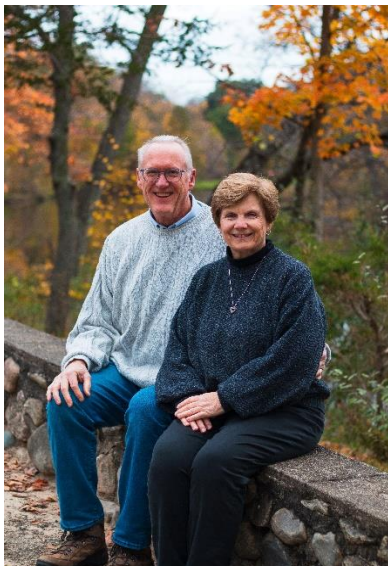
~~~Pastor Noah Filipiak



[www.noahfilipiak.com](http://www.noahfilipiak.com)

[www.mosaicgr.org](http://www.mosaicgr.org)

**Mosaic exists to be a multi-ethnic church living out Jesus' kingdom values, bringing racial equity and gospel freedom to the city of Grand Rapids.**



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