Bringing the Kingdom on Campus

Shaun Brauteseth 19 February 2019



The Nelson Mandela University campus is wedged into the most south-eastern corner of our city, Port Elizabeth, South Africa. Tens of thousands of students further their education there each year, with many coming from other cities and countries, and staying on campus itself. So, what's a local church to do? We've asked ourselves this question every year, and the answer has always been: feed them. Yes, yes – feed them spiritually. But also, feed them. As in, actual food.

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At the beginning of each academic year, during the orientation week for new students, Oxygen Life runs a campus outreach that involves inviting as many students as possible to a one-night-only event. On that night, we feed them, free of

charge, and get to know them. We've tried cupcakes and pancakes (sugar rush, anyone?) and, for the last two years, we've made boerewors rolls (for all non-South Africans, boerewors is like sausage hand-stuffed by a bearded mountaineer). This year, we spent a week advertising on campus, and made about 1000 boerewors rolls in a grassy area outside the student dorms.



We played some music, got the food ready, and waited for the students. And they came. They came hungry, curious, grateful, and ready to hang out. Inevitably, they wanted to know one thing: why? And we were ready with the answer: we want to bless the students, welcome them to a new year of studying, chat to them, take an interest in them, and share the gospel message that has changed our lives. We've been on the receiving end of extreme generosity from God, and so how can we not be generous towards others?

> And so…two days after the boerewors roll outreach, we launched our Campus Congregation

In years past, for all the impact our campus outreaches have had, there has been a limitation. Most students aren't able to travel off-campus very easily, and so a church that meets ten or so kilometers away, short distance though it may be, can still be out of reach. We've tried to bridge that gap by offering lifts, but we felt the time was right to take it a step further.



And so, on the 10th of February, two days after the

boerewors roll outreach, we launched our Campus Congregation, Oxygen Life's fourth congregation in the city. Headed up by Ant Meek and Nqubs Gwavu, the Campus Congregation meets on a Sunday morning inside a building on campus, meaning students can simply walk from their dorms. Due to the compact size of the venue, we had to ask members of other congregations not to visit for the first meeting, and had roughly 50 people on the first morning, made up of members who've joined from other congregations as well as first-time visitors who heard about it from the outreach.



Already, the congregation has taken on its own identity, based on its context, including a sprinkling of Xhosa-language worship because of the high numbers of Xhosa students on campus. The environment is one of transience, with many students only in the city for a fixed number of years. But we are determined to build a healthy church; after all, outreaches, worship sessions and apologetics events often mark a Christian presence on university campuses, but it's through the church that the manifold wisdom of God will ultimately be made known. And so we've taken this step with great anticipation of lives that will be changed – people who've moved to our city to get a degree but are going to meet Jesus and come into His family. And already, from our first meeting, we've seen that very thing happen.

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So our fourth congregation is officially up and running, propelled by the conviction that God wants to strategically place healthy churches around our city, and that when we step out in faith and with boldness, He will build His church.

Oxygen Life Church's **Campus Congregation Details:**