



[E-Mail This Story](#)
[Print This Story](#)
[RSS](#)

## Tiny Waterloo church takes new approach to ministry

The Waterloo United Methodist Church in Byram, which has served its congregation since before the Civil War, may be a perfect example of the old and the new converging in spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In this classic and beautifully restored sanctuary that is approaching its 150th anniversary, something innovative is happening.

According to Pastor Joe McCarthy, an ordained elder with the United Methodist Church, this is the only Methodist church in New Jersey that is incorporating a pastoral team of three for a congregation of fewer than 100, rather than the traditional one-pastor leadership.

"The church is taking a fresh and modern approach to ministry in this inter-generational congregation that is very progressive. They are intentionally inclusive, by which I mean they are open to the young and old, conservative and liberal, gay and straight, rich and poor, suburban and small town, black and Cauca-sian, or any other wonderful variation," Pastor McCarthy said.

This historic church with this contemporary bent is drawing its flock from the surrounding towns, including Andover, Newton, Stanhope, Byram, Green, Hacketts-town and Flanders.

"Jesus Christ spent most of his time with people on the edge," says Pastor McCarthy. "We are using as our model the church in the New Testament Book of Acts by noticing, accepting and taking each other seriously, by really worshipping and preaching strongly and joining God's concern for social justice."

### Lay Leadership

It isn't only the team approach that is modern and new, but also that two out of the three are lay pastors -- a new category in the United Methodist denomination.

"This is a modern version of John Wesley's vision for mission, which trained and sent ministers out under the guidance of an elder, which is how I will serve in this team approach," says Pastor McCarthy, who brings decades of experience to the position. "I am the man who has been around the block."

The three pastors take turns preaching and designing the "highly interactive" worship experience together, an arrangement that started July 1.

Pastor Tim Nicinski, 38, is a former Marine, police officer, and teacher and is now the principal of Great Meadows Middle School. Adding the title of pastor to his vocational resume has been the result of what he calls "a slow process."

"I started out being involved in small-group ministry in my church, then enrolled in a Disciple Bible Program, that then spiraled into preaching and visitation which is what led me to become a Lay Pastor at Waterloo," he says. "Waterloo is really open -- there is a oneness and unity to this congregation and they have accepted us with open arms to do this new kind of pastorate, which is very different. There's not one set way for church to do church ... church is ever-changing, and it has always been that way -- it's healthy for humanity."

Pastor Anthony Pami, 36, CPA and Senior Director of Financial Reporting for ADP (Automatic Data Processing), is married and has three children. Five years ago, he wasn't even involved in any church, even though he had grown up attending a Catholic church. He drifted away from the church in his 20s, like many young adults.

"I needed a return to something, and was seeking a church that wasn't necessarily tied to any particular faith tradition when I started to attend a large Methodist church in Hackettstown," he said.

"Little by little I got more and more involved doing men's small group ministry, where men come together for honest interaction, to share their issues. Then, over the last couple of years, I became more involved in a contemporary worship service, and one thing led to another, and I was asked to help pastor at Waterloo."

Pami's story seems to be only the beginning for what lies ahead. Along with being a pastor, he's leading a new men's spirituality group called "Men of Summer/Sons of Thunder," which is aimed at "revealing the full life that God is offering through the image of Jesus ... A life that exists in the now -- in our every day -- in our homes, our work, in our success and failures -- a life that is revealed to us through desire and passion ... a life that exists beyond the walls of our church buildings," a group that is open to all men, whether involved in a church or not.

For Pami, the church in this day and age serves the same purpose it has always served:

To share the person of Jesus Christ and to be brothers and sisters of one another.

"People need connection, they need family and community in our highly individualized society. They need to stand together, experiencing the words of Jesus when he said that He came that we might have life and have it to the full, and that is what the church offers together as a community--an experience of living a more abundant, fulfilling, sustaining, fruitful life than you could imagine. When we give and are generous, we are fulfilled--the opposite of the way most of us lead our lives. When we say we find God, when we say we are redeemed, restored, saved, or

Email:   
 Password:

Login

[Sign Up For Online Access](#)  
[Manage My Subscription](#)

**Most Emailed Stories**

whatever word you want to use, it's contrary to keep it to yourself. The journey is one we walk together, sharing that message and faith and life with others... that is what church is all about."

The intent of church is not to exist for itself, but to reach out, or as Pastor McCarthy says, "to not put too much of a circumference because God doesn't put any. There is a social need about which we have to respond here, in this location."

Reaching beyond itself, the Waterloo church supports the national and international works of mercy through the National United Methodist Church, and is serving the wider community through supporting the Byram Food Bank. It is also exploring other options such as Big Brothers Big Sisters, and Habitat for Humanity, and various inner-city ministries.

What lies at the core of the theology being lived out here is "to make personal and human the love who is God," adds Pastor McCarthy. "Because God is love and it is love that brings people together."

Waterloo United Methodist Church is located within the Historic Waterloo Village in Byram. From July through Labor Day, worship is at 9:30 a.m., with fellowship and refreshments following. After Labor Day, worship will start at 10 a.m. For more information about the church, or worship and church school times, call (973) 347-7900 or Pastor McCarthy at (908) 763-2057.

\* \* \*

The Rev. Sherry Karasik is the pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Delaware, and the First Presbyterian Church of Oxford, in Warren County. She is also the Truck Stop Chaplain at the T/A in Columbia.

*Created: 7/24/2008 | Updated: 7/24/2008*