

Anew in New York

Story by Debra Smith
Photos by Kimmi Hartfield, unless otherwise noted

It was Sunday, May 5th, and Pastor Drew Segawa sat astounded as he listened to the Navarro family's heartrending story. After morning worship at the church he leads, Calvary Chapel At The Cross in Queens, NY, Drew and others had driven southward through Queens to hold an afternoon worship and Bible teaching service in Far Rockaway, NY. As he talked with the Navarros afterward, Drew learned that two days prior, a close family friend had been murdered—just days after the young man's release from prison. He had been like a son to the Navarros, who were making his funeral arrangements and mourning him as a family member. Drew was heartbroken. Face-to-face with such a vivid instance of sin's tragic effects on human society, he was also strengthened in what had already been his passion: to continue bringing Christians to nurture new believers in Far Rockaway. Only through Christ's forgiveness and transforming power, Drew was reminded, can future instances of evil be prevented—as perpetrators turn to Jesus—and can sufferers find hope to persevere through catastrophe.

Drew was also grateful for the opportunity to minister to the sorrowing family. "If this had happened seven months ago, we wouldn't have known them," Drew pointed out. "It's only because of Hurricane Sandy that we got involved in Far Rockaway. All along, we've wanted to make ourselves available as representatives of Jesus Christ to those who are hurting."

"By this all will know that you are My [Jesus'] disciples, if you have love for one another." John 13:35

After the superstorm devastated much of the region's coastline in October 2012, several Calvary Chapels had banded together to serve victims. Many from CC At The Cross, one of the most involved fellowships, had committed to ministering weekly in the Far Rockaway neighborhood of South



Pastor Drew Segawa

Queens. As residents' need for relief aid had faded through the months—while spiritual needs remained—the volunteers had begun to transition the ministry. The site from which they had given away food, bottled water, clothing, and other physical necessities was becoming a location for worship services and the teaching of God's Word. The afternoon on which Drew learned of the murder was, in fact, the first Sunday that the group had met.

All along, the Navarros had shown great interest in seeking the Lord. They had been some of the most faithful attendees as soon as the believers had begun holding Saturday Bible studies. Before the hurricane struck, shared Nicole Navarro, "I was going through a lot in life." Nicole is an adult daughter of the family's matriarch, Diana, who attends along with multiple children and grandchildren. Nicole continued, "I am a single mother of four, and it's hard. At one point in my life, I had just stopped trying. Then when I started putting God first, things became better for me and my babies. So I thank the church for opening their doors for me and my family."

But those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint. Isaiah 40:31

Drew stated, "We hope it becomes a church. We're taking it slowly; we want to wait on the Lord and follow His leading, instead of running ahead of Him. But the people look at it as a church service. ... We're praying God raises up a pastor and other spiritual leaders."

Watching God Work

When Yvonne Williams first visited in early April, she requested prayer regarding her health. Having already undergone two surgeries, she was extremely worried—having just been told that she likely had cancer and definitely needed another serious operation. After being prayed for and re-tested, however, she was told by another physician



Luke Miller from CC At The Cross in Queens, NY, teaches the Bible in Far Rockaway, NY. After doing relief aid for months, the group has begun holding Sunday worship services. Photo by Drew Segawa

that surgery was not needed. Drew said, "Yvonne believes the Lord either healed her or gave her the strength and wisdom to get a second opinion. We see her weekly now, and her spirit is much lighter and more joyous than at first. It's such a blessing to see God work in people's lives." 🙏

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Rick Sanders shares the Gospel with children who said they had never before heard about Jesus.



Susan Segawa, right, Drew's wife, shares Scripture with a young woman who comes to the Bible study in Far Rockaway. Many attend faithfully.