

## This Easter Season is a wonderful time to focus on Christ's victory and the mission of the church. Cindy Larson and Kelli Benner share an amazing story of how God linked their lives.

**C**indy Larson and Kelli Benner met for the first time in 1993 while working together as nurses in the cardiology lab at Abbot Northwestern Hospital. At the time Kelli had her plate full raising three children and working full time. Cindy was a busy mom as well.

As their paths crossed on the job over the years, they were encouraged to learn that they were sisters in Christ. They could also share with one another on a spiritual level.

Cindy participated in a Neighborhood Bible Study that she occasionally mentioned to Kelli, always leaving the door open for Kelli to join her. Cindy's invitation sparked Kelli's curiosity, but at that time in her life she just didn't have the time to go.

**K**elli had been involved in a local church for several years. As her children entered their tumultuous teen years, she began bouncing around to different congregations trying to find a church home that would please them. With no success, she ended up feeling discouraged and disconnected. After 5 years of this, she was ready for a change.

One day in 2005, after becoming an empty-nester, Kelli noticed a sign reading, "Women's Neighborhood Bible Study" as she drove down Chicago Avenue. It dawned on her that times had changed, and her children no longer demanded all of her time. She was free to pursue her heart's desires! Kelli made a mental note to check into it.

As she continued driving, she recalled Cindy's occasional invitation and soon realized this was the same Bible study. Kelli contacted Cindy and joined her for the study that same week, 10 years after Cindy first planted the seed.



Kelli Benner

### Invite a Friend: How to get started!

- 1) **Pray** for your friend and look for continued interests and opportunities to be involved in their life.
- 2) **Investigate**. Ask your friend, "What are your plans for Easter?"
- 3) **Plant a seed**. Talk about your plans and the significance of Easter in your life.
- 4) **Invite** him / her to the service / brunch. If you wish, use invite cards available in the foyer.
- 5) **Follow up** by reconnecting with them.

ion of **BRINGING** people into a relationship with Jesus Christ.  
d them together at First Free 10 years after they first met.



Over the last couple of years, Kelli has appreciated the connection she's made. "The Bible study really helps keep me grounded. I love how it connects me with Christian women from different generations."

Shortly after Kelli settled down at First Free, she invited her cousin, Cassandra, who began coming to the services with her. Cassandra's initial visits to the church included last year's Easter service and brunch. Cassandra slowly connected with a small group of Christian women, and has since re-dedicated her life to Christ.

Last summer she was baptized at Lake Nokomis. Cassandra continues to grow in her faith and participates in a Sunday evening women's Bible study.

Isn't it encouraging to see how God has worked over time to accomplish His purposes in the lives of these women? And their story isn't over yet. The Lord continues to work through them to reach people who need Christ. What a joy to be able to look back and see how His plan unfolded over the course of many years to connect a daughter of His with a body of believers and then to bring another to the point of rededication and baptism.

"It's all about God," Cindy says. "It's such a privilege to be a part of His plan and watch how He works. If we just listen to His prompting, He does everything. He works out all the details in His time."

We'd like to encourage YOU to be in prayer about whom God would have you invite to the Easter services this year. You never know how He plans to work through your invitation.

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Cindy Larson

