

# A Small Church with a Big Heart for the NYPD



CC of Greene Senior Pastor Jack Richards, left, begins the outreach by sharing a bold Gospel message among attentive officers at roll call.

Pastor Jack Richards from CC of Greene, VA, stood to address about two dozen New York City police officers gathered in a dimly lit precinct building. The officers, dressed in uniform and ready to start their daily patrols of the subway system, turned to give him their attention.

Story by Noreen Hay and Debra Smith  
Photos by Loren Heinle



Jack, left, and Mac Kennedy, right, pray for New York Police Department (NYPD) is

Officer Garcia, center, a recent Air Force returnee from Iraq, who requested prayer for protection on the job. The outreach to the through the ministry Precincts in Prayer, which began after the terrorist attack on September 11, 2001.

“Jesus washed the feet of Judas Iscariot—even though He knew Judas was His enemy who would eventually betray Him,” Jack said. Several of the officers leaned casually on vending machines as Jack continued. “Jesus put His life on the line for all sinners, and in many ways, you do the same daily—put your life on the line for people who may not even appreciate it.” Later when the CC pastor offered to pray with the officers, Officer Garcia removed his hat and bowed his head. Thanking God silently for the opportunity, Jack prayed aloud that God would protect this policeman and guide him in making important decisions.

Jack has participated in an ongoing outreach for the past five years to the New York Police Department (NYPD) through the ministry Precincts in Prayer. This past May, believers from his church visited New York to share Bibles and the Gospel with law enforcement officers.

### Leading Officers to Christ

Mac and Stephanie Kennedy led the Precincts in Prayer outreach from CC of Greene. Of the NYPD officers, Mac said, “Our greatest hope is that they would come into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. We have no other agenda.”

Precincts in Prayer began as a ministry to police officers in New York City shortly after the attack on the World Trade Center buildings. In the aftermath of the disaster, many believers from across the country visited New York to minister to those who were involved in the cleanup and rescue efforts at Ground Zero. “We saw an incredible ministry opportunity, so we began praying for ways to get the Word of God into their hands,” said Stephanie, Mac’s wife. “Prayer is the foundation of everything we do.” Stephanie was instrumental in establishing Precincts in Prayer in conjunction with other like-minded Christians from around

the country as a result of their shared experiences after the terrorist attacks. The ministry has expanded its focus to include law enforcement officers in any geographic area.

### A Rural Fellowship Ministers in the City

Jack is senior pastor at CC of Greene, located in Ruckersville, VA, in Greene County. He first learned about Precincts in Prayer in 2004. Jack recalled, “When Stephanie shared all that the Lord had been doing since 9/11, I took my first trip to New York. That is when I fell in love with the people of that city.” He



The Virginia team enjoys a light moment with members of the NYPD. After many ministry trips, close relationships with several officers have developed.

and the small fellowship he pastors in rural Virginia have a big heart for New York.

CC of Greene plans two trips to New York every year—one in the spring and another before Christmas. “The goal of the mission is getting the Bibles into the officers’ hands,” explained Stephanie. “God’s Word is so powerful; even though we can’t stay behind and see what happens, His Word does not return void.”

***“So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish***

***what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.”***

Isaiah 55:11

The team distributed 20-25 *Peacemakers New Testaments* at each of the many precincts visited on this last trip. The Bibles contain testimonies and a policeman’s prayer. Over the past several years, the group has distributed 3,000 Bibles citywide and hopes to reach more of the 42,000 police officers in the city of New York. On their last trip, during “National Police Week” in May, doors opened to talk to officers in several of Manhattan’s precincts and transit districts.

### Lower Manhattan

The trip began at Transit District 2, a division of the NYPD that secures a portion of the subway lines of lower Manhattan. Officer Catherine Hall-Francis, whom the team had met on a previous trip in 2007, invited them to come and speak at roll call—the time when officers gather and receive assignments before going out on the day’s rounds. When she first encountered the believers two years before, Catherine recalled, “I was inspired by their ministry, and truthfully a little embarrassed. They had come from Virginia at their own expense, lugging backpacks filled with Bibles, to share the Gospel with those I work with every day.” When Catherine distributed the donated Bibles to

her fellow officers, she was surprised by how readily they received them. “Soon people began asking for them,” she said.

The team received a warm reception that Tuesday morning at District 2. The officers had prepared breakfast for them, and Jack gave a powerful presentation of salvation that only comes through a relationship with Jesus Christ. Catherine continued, “So many others have a tendency to water down the Gospel to appeal to people these days. I was so thankful that Jack made it really clear,” said Catherine. The team spent two hours talking with and praying for the law enforcement officers at District 2 before departing for several other precincts that had invited them.



Heads bowed, preparing for the day, officers pray at roll call for wisdom and protection on the job.

***“Seeing God’s Spirit move in my precinct brought such joy. I am so thankful for this ministry.”***

Officer Catherine Hall-Francis



Sgt. Mercado, right, of Transit District 2, talks with the team as they visit precincts in New York.

When it was time to leave, two officers unexpectedly provided the team with transportation for the rest of the day's visits. "They even went in with us," said Stephanie. "Having them along was amazing. We saw walls come down as they introduced us to their fellow police officers."

Later, Catherine told her husband it was one of the best days of her life. "Seeing God's Spirit move in my precinct brought such joy. I am so thankful for this ministry."

## East Harlem

Officer Eddie Pinero has a unique perspective. As a 13-year veteran of the NYPD, he has been instrumental in connecting the Calvary Chapel ministries with the police officers in New York. Eddie is also the pastor of CC Manhattan North, a new Calvary Chapel in East Harlem. He understands the harsh realities that police officers deal with every day as well as the desire of the believers to share the hope they have in Jesus Christ.



**Eddie Pinero**

"They [police officers] sometimes seem a little unapproachable," said Pastor Eddie. "But now I see Bibles sitting on their desks, and I know God is able to reach them." He has witnessed the consequences of the ministries that have labored to reach the officers since 9/11.

In 2008, the NYPD received over 117,000 reports of alleged crimes. Eddie continued, "We deal with serious crimes all the time. But now, it is no longer just going out on patrol and beating the bad guys. Since 9/11, we have another enemy—terrorism." Though it has been eight years since the terrorist attacks in New York, the NYPD cannot afford to forget. "Even if we wanted to, the post-9/11 training we receive is a constant reminder," explained Eddie. The officers know that there is always a possibility that their city could get hit again.

This constant threat may be one of the reasons why the ministry is having such an impact on the officers. Stephanie often sees tough-looking men in blue brought to tears when they are told that they haven't been forgotten. "We give them Bibles because we want them to know that Jesus hasn't forgotten them either," said Stephanie.



**Pastor Jack, left, was able to pray with many different officers during the outreach.**

"Ultimately, God is the One who cares about them, and He has put it on our hearts to care about them too," said Mac. On this last trip, the biblical account found in Joshua 6 of how God brought down the walls of Jericho took on new meaning for Stephanie. She shared, "As Joshua and the people obediently walked around the city, God gave them victory. I feel that is what He is doing in this ministry too. For seven years, we have walked around New York City, and now we are seeing the walls come down." 🙌

***And the seventh time it happened ... Joshua said to the people: "Shout, for the Lord has given you the city!"***

Joshua 6:16



**Linda Leshko, left, embraces Catherine Hall-Francis, the officer she had long prayed for but only recently met.**

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