

Kevven Kijak from Park Valley Church on going portable ... again!

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Episode Transcript

Rich – Well hey everybody, welcome to the Portable Multisite Church podcast. My name's Rich Birch, the host around these parts, so glad that you've decided to spend some time with us today, to put us in your earbuds, to listen on a great conversation, I'm looking forward to today's conversation. The church is in Virginia, we've got Park Valley Church Kevven Kijak on the line today. Kevven thanks for being on the show.

Kevven – Hey buddy, my pleasure, thanks for asking me.

Rich – This is going to be wonderful, I'm really looking forward to hearing more about your story. Why don't we start with telling us a little bit about yourself and about Park Valley?

Kevven – Sure, I've been at Park Valley for about 11 years now, the church is just a little bit over 11 years. I'm a dad; 3 boys, married. Life's been good.

Rich – 3 boys, that's a lot.

Kevven – I'm telling you, they keep me on my toes, I'm tired half the time. So ministry's great, I've got a 12 year old, a 9 year old, a 4 year old, so they're keeping me busy. But Park Valley is about 11 years old and God has been doing some cool stuff. It started off with just my senior pastor obviously and a small group of 20 and called me shortly after to come down and help them. We originally were from Massachusetts, so moving down I guess to the South was kind of a transition for us.

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Rich – Yeah absolutely.

Kevven – But God’s just been good. We’ve been here for about 11 years now and just plugging away, plugging away.

Rich – Cool why don’t you tell us a little bit of the story of Park Valley, like the history, give us a sense of flavor of the church?

Kevven – Sure, our pastor was originally born here in Virginia. We’re right outside of D.C. Fairfax area, Manassas area and he came up to New England, where I’m from and became my senior pastor there for 5 years but man from back home here said, “Hey you need to come and start a church, it’s blooming out here, people are building houses like crazy, it’s a bedroom community of D.C.”

So he ended coming back here, the church started to grow. So about 2 months after he grew the church or the church was grown, he called me and asked me to come and do the student ministries. So pretty much I did everything outside of the auditorium, he ran everything inside the auditorium and from that point we’ve just been growing, reaching people, reaching this community. We run a little bit over 2 thousand now, trying just to stay ahead of the curve and not get run over.

Rich – Nice.

Kevven – It’s a great area, people are excited. I think one of the blessings that we’ve had is so many people are moving into our area and that’s the best time to start looking for a church, you know, when you’re new to the area, or they’re young families; start having kids. We believe those are the two times where people start saying, “I need to get connected, get back into church.”

So our model was, “Let’s take the weirdness out of church. Let’s just make it comfortable, let’s make it exciting, let’s make it somewhere that they want to be.” So that’s kind of been our mindset of ministry in the church.

The first 7 years we were in an elementary school down the road from here. We build a beautiful building, have been in that building for about 3 or 4 years and just recently we left our beautiful, nice, already setup building to go to a high school across the street to setup in there on Sundays, just for more room, for more space. It’s been interesting, it’s been a great transition.

Rich – That’s an interesting story. So you still own the building, but it’s just not big enough to accommodate Sunday mornings?

Kevven – We were doing our 1.5 services. So 1 on Saturday and 4 on Sunday and you get that 3-legged beast, the parking, the seating in the auditorium and the children’s ministry. You really can’t fix 1 without fixing all 3 of them and we were just landlocked with parking. So we are in the process now of adding on and building a new worship center, stuff like that, but that’s a 3 to 4 year process for us here, dealing with the county and there’s no way we wanted to sit idle for 3 or 4 years. So our auditorium holds about 5 hundred, the

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auditorium at the high school holds about 7, 8, 9 hundred. So we decided to go portable again.

Rich – Wow that’s amazing. So now did you move all the kids’ ministry and everything, over to the school?

Kevven – Everything.

Rich – Everything, so just your offices are there now and then midweek meetings, that kind of thing?

Kevven – Midweek stuff and we still do our Saturday night service here. We do have a second campus that we deal with. So we record our Saturday night service here, so we sold as, “Hey if you like the building, come to Saturday night.”

Rich – Nice.

Kevven – Then we do our 3 Sunday morning services over at the high school.

Rich – Okay very cool. So you decided to go multisite and that was in the middle of all of this, which is incredible, this is why this is an incredible story, there’s a lot going on at your church. What led you to the point where you said, “Okay we need to launch another campus,”?

Kevven – It was just a desire to keep reaching people. Our pastor is very evangelism driven, we want to reach people and those people married to the Lord and so we have another up and coming community. Our model was, plant yourself right where they’re building homes.

There’s another community about 20 minutes that they’re just throwing up homes, people are moving in left and right. So we just try to model what we did existingly and that was our first experience with portable church because I said, “There’s no way we’re doing it the way we did it before, we’ve got to make it easier, no one’s going to leave this building.” That was my first experience with portable church, when I started doing some research on how to make it easier than using rubber made bins.

Rich – Right absolutely. So any surprises? You have a unique scenario in that you’ve been portable and then permanent and then back to portable and now portable and multisite, so you’ve a lot of experience doing this. What’s been some of those surprises when you got back to portable the second time, like you said the casing, you wanted to make it easier obviously?

Kevven – Yeah you always want to make it easier because you’re asking a lot of people, we asked them to give and give and give so they could build this building and it’s a beautiful building. Then you say, “Hey we’ve been in here 3 years and we want to switch, we want to switch stuff around.”

Rich – Right.

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Kevven – I guess what surprises me is just the faithfulness of the people, they see the big picture. When people are found they want to find people. So we were able to really transition and have a good mindset.

It's kind of funny, because if you've ever been portable, you understand the friendships that are built in that time and the excitement and DNA that happens and when we came to our building, we kind of lost that a little bit. I guess you don't realize until you go back to it. We find being portable is a very easy way to get people plugged in. When you ask someone, "Hey do you want to teach in the children's ministry?" They're a little bit more, "Well I've never done that before." "Hey can you pull a case for me?" "I can do that, I can move a case."

So two of my surprises were how willing people were to leave our church. This building isn't our church, God has blessed us with 4 walls and a roof and we love it, but when it becomes a hindrance, we're going to keep moving. So that was surprising, just the willingness for people to get behind it and a huge blessing of just a faithfulness of our church saying, "This is easy, we've got it down to a science."

Rich – Right absolutely. That's interesting so now the multisite location, tell us about that. Where are you meeting there? So you're meeting at a high school at this location and what are you doing over there, what's that location like?

Kevven – Our second campus?

Rich – Yeah the second campus.

Kevven – It's an elementary school. We really tried to model the same concept that we had when we started Park Valley itself. We just kept it simple; we're going to meet in the gym, we're going to wheel the carts in, we're going to setup, we're going to family ministry well. That's been our bread and butter, young families with kids. I have 3 boys, our pastor has 4 boys, that was kind of a requirement to be on staff, you had to have all boys.

We just really tried to duplicate what we did here and then take it over there. If you walk into either one, whether it's a building, whether it's the high school or whether it's the elementary school, the signs are going to be the same, the visuals are going to be the same, the coffee is the same, the cups we use are the same. So we just really tried to keep that DNA of this ministry throughout all of our branches, out of all of our campuses. So no matter where we go, you'll recognize our logo, our branding.

That's one thing we were afraid of, we didn't want to leave our location and cause too much of a confusion of, if I walk into this, what is this and what is that? So to us our branding was huge, 11 years in a community, you kind of have a name in your community, so we wanted to make sure people recognized what Park Valley was and where Park Valley was.

Rich – Absolutely, very cool. Now obviously you have a lot of volunteers engaged to make all of that happen. That doesn't just happen miraculously by itself. What are you doing to make a great volunteer experience for your teams, what are some of those things you've kind of learned along the way?

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Kevven – Community is huge and the other thing is people want to be appreciated. They want to know that they're valued and that their time isn't being wasted.

Rich – Right.

Kevven – So we're very clear with our staff. I'm the executive pastor so I oversee a lot of the staff and the management of that and any big decisions that we make, I kind of implement those and stuff like that. So just making sure that our staff knows that. We can't pay enough people to do all of the jobs that we have to do here, so if you're not trading volunteers and if you're not loving on your volunteers, those are our biggest resources that we have. If it was up just to the staff to pull off a weekend service, we'd be up the creek.

Rich – Absolutely.

Kevven – So we just try to really love on our staff, appreciate our staff, well not our staff, I'm sorry, but our volunteers, to the point where our pastor, our senior pastor who's about to preach in a couple of hours, is in the kids' classroom moving desks and moving chairs and just rubbing shoulders. I think the friendships that are created are what keeps people coming back. They look forward to hanging out with this group of guys and this group of ladies.

So that's one thing that we've kept a focus on, is just saying thank you and letting our volunteers see the wins, because we get the emails, people email the staff and say, "Hey you guys do this, my life was changed by this and my life was changed by that," but really just starting to share those wins, allowing them to see the miracles, allowing our volunteers to be a part of the decision making.

Rich – Yeah absolutely.

Kevven – That's huge, most of our volunteers will probably want to see this podcast, I can say that, we may not implement what they're going to...

Rich – Right, right, right.

Kevven – But we definitely want them to feel like they have a seat at the table because they do, they're the ones on the ground.

Rich – Yeah absolutely.

Kevven – They're the ones who are on the frontlines. In my mind I'm thinking this is the perfect scenario for this, but really just listening to their ideas and not having that attitude of, "Listen I'm the paid profession, you're just a..." but really valuing their opinion.

So appreciating them, valuing their opinions, letting them have a seat at the table when it comes to changes that we're going to implement, because those are some of the things that we have really tried to do, because again, our bottom line is, without our volunteers, we have nothing.

Rich – Absolutely.

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Kevven – You’re kind of like a ship stuck in the water with nowhere to go.

Rich – Yeah absolutely and I think there’s a lot you’ve said there, a lot packed in, I don’t want people to miss that. At the core of a great portable church is just a great set of volunteers. So working hard to cultivate those relationships and going out of our way to build them.

Also the thing you said too earlier that I’ve found in our own ministry. There is a segment of volunteers that, I think most churches aren’t able to tap into and it is a little bit of that kind of setup/teardown crew. There’s a group of guys, it tends to be guys, not all guys but tends to be guys, who in a normal church where you’ve got a building or in a church where you’ve got a building, not that this isn’t normal, those guys just don’t find a place, they don’t find a spot to serve. Because it’s like they don’t want to hand out bulletins, they don’t want to work with kids, they’re not going to be on the band, but they do find a home in this kind of ministry and that’s exciting to see more folks plugged in to ministry, for sure.

Kevven – Yeah and that’s something that we definitely saw. It changes your, I’m not sure what the right word would be, it just changes your personality.

Rich – Right.

Kevven – When you’re portable, it’s a very easy, unthreatening way to get, like you said, men. I don’t know if that would be politically correct, so I tried to avoid that.

Rich – No but I think it’s true.

Kevven – It’s true, the men jump in. Don’t get me wrong the women are great, they work just as hard, but it’s just a very easy entry level. Especially in America today where most of the women are spiritually leading the homes and they’re having a hard time getting their husbands plugged in. Especially in our area, one of the spouses may be driving for an hour and a half each way to get into D.C. and getting home, so they’re tired and they’re exhausted, they don’t want to have to prep for anything, but to say, “Hey come in and do some mindless work and help us.”

I find personally that’s the best time for me to connect with people as a pastor, for me to rub shoulders with our volunteers, because as soon as the service starts I’m going in 30 different directions. For that 2 hours beforehand, it’s just hanging out, talking, moving tables, setting stuff up and learning about their families. I think that’s what people enjoy and what helps build those relationships. That’s what keeps them coming back.

Rich – Well there’s great community developed there. Again there seems to be folks that enjoy that setup/teardown thing that doing work together, standing side by side and setting up some cases or unpacking cases and running cables and all that and having conversation in the midst of that is a great way to develop community.

So changing direction a little bit into something a little different, what’s your favorite piece of gear in your system? So the thing that you’re like, “Wow that’s a cool piece of gear to help with the setup/teardown?”

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Kevven – Yeah our first 7 years, the school we used was very gracious to us, we had a great relationship, they gave us a big, huge storage closet.

Rich – Oh wow.

Kevven – No one wants to hear me complain about. Then the rest, we had literally 150 rubber made beds that we would just stack on a cart. So my favorite piece which really makes this so much easier is those cases that they give you. I mean the big black cases, because you're really just wheeling it to where you need it, setting it up. The case is what I think is the secret sauce to making portable church doable.

Rich – Absolutely yeah. For folks that don't know, what we're talking about, the whole system is broken down into these large cases, they're probably just over 6 feet tall, probably 5 feet wide and they have all kinds of shelving in it. The thing I love about it is everything's got a little cubbyhole for it to go into. It's all drawn out, so it's easy to see, great for visual learners. It's fantastic for sure.

Kevven – Then for our sound system. Our sound system is built into the case. In our first school we would literally have to plug in every channel.

Rich – Oh gosh, oh my goodness.

Kevven – Now it's 1 plug, it's in the case, you take the lid off. So I really think the case... I mean our amps are in the cases, we don't even have to take our amps out, we just plug... and the ports are all in the side of the cases. So I think the cases are really what makes this functional, because now you're not carrying 2 bins down 3 hallways, you're carrying 1 case and everything is right there. So I think the cases are huge, the way it's packed together. It literally blows my mind because you don't know what you're missing until you've done it without those cases.

Rich – Absolutely, you don't know the pain until you've experienced it and coming from a guy who knows, who's seen it all on both sides of the equation.

Alright, so last question. What would you say to a church leader, somebody who's listening in who's thinking about embarking on their multisite journey, what do you wish you would have known, what would you say to them before they step out or as they're stepping out?

Kevven – One thing I wish we would have decided and had more clear direction knowing, you know 20/20, hindsight 20/20 is deciding whether or not we were starting our second campus to take away some of the pressure from our main campus, or were we starting that campus to reach that group? We decided to do both, so we decided to say, "Hey let's pull people out and send them over there," and I feel like we didn't do it the best way we probably could have. By saying, "Hey we're going here just to reach this community," I think we would have had a better preparation for that as opposed to saying, "Hey let's just take and ask our people from our community here to drive to another community over at that location."

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So that would be one thing that I would say, do some research, find out what's going to be the best for your ministry to alleviate some of the pressure on your current building or are you deciding just to go to this one location.

Know your demographic. Again we do family ministry well, we don't do inner-city very well, we don't do single ministry well, we do family ministry well. So just know what your target is, know who you're reaching and then just research and study and have a plan and bring your team along with you. I have all these great ideas of where we're going in my head, but if our team doesn't know and then I start dropping bombs and you literally, for your first campus, you are asking a lot of your staff, because the reality is they're doing the children's ministry in our campus and they're really doing the children's ministry in our second campus. If they're not allowed to speak into it, if they're just doing what I tell them to do, it burns them out fast.

So make sure you are bringing your staff along with you, as you're making these decisions. Again it's very easy for me to make decisions that affects our whole staff but not really have gotten their input and got their... I won't say their approval, but they're with me or with us, if that makes sense.

Rich – Absolutely. Well I really appreciate you being on the show today Kevven. Thank you so much for your insights. If people want to get in touch with Park Valley Church how can they do that?

Kevven – Sure, the website is just parkvalleychurch.com all of my contact information is on there. My email's kevven@parkvalleychurch.com. We love talking to ministries, so any way we can be a blessing to any church or anyone else, just don't hesitate to let us know because trust me, I have knocked on a lot of doors, I have asked a lot of questions and trying to find as many resources as I possibly can. So any way that we can be a blessing, we're more than willing to do that.

Rich – That's fantastic, thank you so much Kevven for being on the show today.

Kevven – Hey my pleasure, thanks Rich.

Rich – Thank you.