

## Embedded Church Podcast S4E8 – Pete Kelly

**Speaker 1** [00:00:00] He doesn't have to be much more complicated than setting an extra table setting at your table to invite somebody over for dinner.

**Speaker 2** [00:00:11] Welcome to the Embedded Church podcast, where we share stories about reliving the connections between the place, the built environment and the mission of God.

**Speaker 3** [00:00:21] Season four of the Embedded Church podcast is produced in partnership with the Ormond Center at Duke Divinity School. The mission of Ormond Center is to foster the imagination will and ability of congregations and communities to be agents of thriving.

**Speaker 2** [00:00:35] I'm Eric Jacobson

**Speaker 3** [00:00:36] and I'm Sara Joy, protégé and we'll be your hosts and today's episode of the Embedded Church podcast.

**Speaker 2** [00:00:48] Hey, Sarah Joy, one of the things that really has stuck with me about this interview with Pete Kelly is his focus on apartment life in ministry to folks living in apartments because that's super challenging for us. Here in Tacoma, we are surrounded by multifamily large apartment buildings, and we have been scratching our heads, figuring out how to get to know these people and how to engage with them. I think Pete Kelly's model of apartment life is really brilliant, and I'm excited to share that with our listeners.

**Speaker 4** [00:01:14] Yeah, and if our listeners don't know, Eric and I had an in person embedded church hangout time just a couple of weeks ago. I got to the coma and actually witnessed the fact that there is a large multifamily building being built right adjacent to Eric's property. And of course, I had to inquire, Well, if the church negotiating easements, how is this all working?

**Speaker 2** [00:01:40] You is so, so nerdy walking around the neighborhood.

**Speaker 4** [00:01:43] I was. But for me, coming from real estate development, I'm always very curious about how deals are penciling out. And I think that that was also really fascinating about Pete Kelley and his work with apartment life is the fact that they're doing this ministry work because they care about the social well-being of apartment dwellers and creating community connections. But they're also looking at it from a business perspective of retaining tenants because one of the biggest costs and expenses for a developer owner of an apartment building is tenant turnover. And so they have found that actually contributing to the quality of life for the tenants means that they're usually more long term occupants of these apartments, and that saves money for the developer owner in the long run. So I was really cool to see that, like they're coming from it from a business standpoint as well, and often you don't see ministry and investment going hand-in-hand. Lots of times people think you either do ministry and you lose money potentially, or you invest and you make money, right? But they're doing both together. So that was cool.

**Speaker 2** [00:02:48] Yeah. So not only is it sustainable as an economic model and strategic, I think it's really cutting edge because as we've noted on this podcast, demographics in this country are shifting. People are more and more choosing to live in high density contexts. People are more OK with living in multifamily even when they could

choose otherwise. And so this is a ministry context that I think is going to be part of the future. And I hope you all our listeners will take note and maybe get involved because a lot of opportunities for pastors to get involved here.

**Speaker 4** [00:03:18] So yeah, definitely. Yeah. And I know so many churches who are adjacent to brand new multifamily development, just like your church, Eric. And so I think this could be a really cool way for them to be involved in some of those projects.

**Speaker 2** [00:03:30] Yeah, absolutely. And I'll just add that after our interview, Pete Kelley was so impressed with Tacoma he actually decided to come up, and the following week I taught him around Tacoma. So, you know, Taco is really cutting edge, too. I think that's probably a big takeaway from this whole episode

**Speaker 4** [00:03:45] because Eric lives there.

**Speaker 2** [00:03:46] Exactly. It's the that. You're all right. Well, I'm excited to share with y'all this interview and get you guys excited about apartment life as we are as well. We've got Pete Kelly here from Apartment Life with us today, and I just I can't tell you how excited Sara Joy and I are both about this Ministry of Apartment Life, but first, you want to get to know Pete a little bit better. So, Pete, welcome to our podcast.

**Speaker 1** [00:04:21] Hey, thanks for having me.

**Speaker 2** [00:04:22] Yeah, absolutely. So tell us a little bit about your story and what were you doing before apartment life and what drew you into that ministry

**Speaker 1** [00:04:31] going way back? I grew up in a pretty secular home. We never went to church at all. Not on Christmas, not on Easter. And as a young teenager ended up coming to faith in Christ through the influence of a family that just invited me into their home, into the natural flow of their life. And that really changed my life. And so when I got to college, I just continued to have this heart for people who were far from the Lord, and I got involved with a ministry called crew used to be called Campus Crusade for Christ. But for twenty four years, I served with collegiate ministry in different capacities. And I've just I've always had a heart for people who don't know God have misconceptions about what a relationship with God is and just helping them make that journey of either moving a step closer or fully into a relationship with God. So did that for twenty four years. And then a headhunter reached out to me on LinkedIn and told me about this opportunity with farming life and so moved into this role about five and half years ago,

**Speaker 2** [00:05:35] and you hadn't heard of it before the headhunter reached out to you.

**Speaker 1** [00:05:38] I know I had heard of it and I had a high regard for apartment life, but I never really contemplated working for them. And honestly, I'm not used to getting a lot of LinkedIn messages. And so when the headhunter reached out, I really let that thing sit in the inbox for about two months before I responded.

**Speaker 4** [00:05:57] So I was like, That's fascinating. I think that's one of the first stories I've heard of a headhunter working through LinkedIn.

**Speaker 2** [00:06:04] That's before we before we move on. I just want to point out here my crew affiliates listing Typekit is wearing a crew shirt, even, you know, so keeping the

speaker that represented, yes, nice work. So that's a great that's a great ministry, and what you're getting into is really great as well.

**Speaker 4** [00:06:20] That's fascinating to hear. I also think, Eric, you neglected to tell our listeners that Pete is in Texas. Yeah, there's that. And I think he's the first Texan we've had on this show. So I just got to be really excited about that for a moment.

**Speaker 2** [00:06:37] I'm feeling a little ganged up on right now, but that's all right.

**Speaker 4** [00:06:42] So, well, it's great that you got connected with apartment life, and it's been really fun for me to hear a bit about what apartment life is, especially coming from somebody who's worked in the multifamily real estate development world. But I'd love for you to share with our listeners a bit more about the mission of apartment life and how that came about and got started as an organization.

**Speaker 1** [00:07:04] Sure. Sure. Well, apartment life has been around for twenty one years now. We're a faith based nonprofit that serves the multifamily industry, and we were started around the year 2000. Stand ups founder, located in the mid cities of the Dallas Fort Worth area, was doing apartment ministry through First Baptist Euless and really wanted to scale it. And he realized to really scale the ministry the best and easiest way to do that is to build it on a business model. So we've got a business model that's not inherently spiritual that provides a lot of value to apartment owners. One of the things that will sell apartment owners is that loneliness is a big issue. It's a human issue, but it's also a business problem. And if your residents that are living in your apartments are lonely, they don't have any roots that keep them in that community. And it's the apartment community just down the road offered to get that deal. They'll just pick up and move and go live over there. What we found is that the more relationships a person has in that apartment community, the happier they are and the longer they stay, even when the rent goes up. And so our program really facilitates the sense of community and in our classic program will place to people. They live in that community and they're like the welcome wagon that greet every new resident when they move in and the gift cookies, water, whatever, they'll throw all the parties and events, they'll look for opportunities to care for people. And as they do that, it creates this sticky community where people actually know their neighbors. Yeah. And so that's the business value add. But all the people that we employ doing it are people who love Jesus. And as they go about doing the program, they have hundreds of natural opportunities to connect people to the local church and a relationship with God. They have very deep, meaningful. Spiritual conversations, and we're in it, actually. Obviously, the spiritual life change that can result from it, but we're very sincere about the business side as well.

**Speaker 4** [00:09:13] That's all, it's really cool. I'm curious to the people that are the welcome hosts, like you said on site. Are they part of property management or is that in addition to property management?

**Speaker 1** [00:09:25] So we would be considered a vendor in the apartment industry. So you have a property management company that would contract with us and a lot of property managers. These are things they want to do, but they're never able to get around to doing it. They a lot of them love people. They want to get around to it. But they're so busy collecting rent and dealing with broken toilets and just keeping the administration of property going that they just really don't have the time to deal with planning events and a deep level and really getting to know their neighbors well. And frankly, sometimes every time they interact with residents, the residents are angry and said, the last thing I want to

do at the end of the week is when they receive all this abuse is at the end of the month. Let's throw a party for all these residents that have been sent into us. So yeah, they they subcontract that out to us and it's an additional value add to them.

**Speaker 2** [00:10:16] That's awesome. So I want to ask a little bit about just your own learning curve in moving into this different type of ministry. You go from college students, which has its own rhythms and its own lots of potential for huge life impact during the college years. But have you picked up a sense of why this kind of work is important as you've been working with apartment life for five years now?

**Speaker 1** [00:10:38] So it is very different about apartment life from Crewe. At least the part of care that I was working with as my audience and crew was very homogenous. It was all college students. And when you think about apartments, they're just inherently diverse. You've got people who have just moved into the country, and so they're brand new to the United States or you've got people who are newly divorced, you've got the elderly, you've got lots of kids running around, you've just got every stage of life. And so it's it's a bit of an eclectic group. The one thing that they all have in common, or at least most of them is they're in some form of transition. They're new to the city, they're newly married, they're newly divorced. There's something new going on in their lives. And you know what we know just from our own personal lives, as when we're in some kind of major transition, we tend to be a lot more spiritually open, receptive. Yeah. And so that's what we found is people are incredibly spiritually receptive. But then in apartment communities, yeah.

**Speaker 2** [00:11:41] Can I ask a follow up to that? Maybe it's obvious from your name, but do you guys also work with condo people or is it always renters?

**Speaker 1** [00:11:49] It's definitely something on the horizon that we have contemplated, but right now we're strictly in apartments. Okay.

**Speaker 4** [00:11:57] So can you talk to us about the types of apartment buildings that you often are in? Are they a certain size or a certain demographic or yeah. Talk to us about that.

**Speaker 1** [00:12:08] Yes. And most of the communities that we serve in order to afford our services need to be a little bit on the larger side. So they tend to be two hundred units and up. Although currently we're serving a community in Oklahoma City, that's forty six units. And so we can serve any size. But for the most part, most owners don't feel like it makes financial sense until they're a certain scale on certain size. We started out in the early 2000s on the higher end the Class A Class B assets and then over the last twenty one years, we've increasingly said, you know, we really want to get to be affordable and the lower income communities that there's just a lot of need.

**Speaker 2** [00:12:48] There is a price point. Or is that a sign I was

**Speaker 4** [00:12:52] going to say it? You define for our listeners what you mean by Class A Class B.

**Speaker 1** [00:12:56] So Class AA tends to be the newer communities and as they age, they kind of go from being an AA to more of a B and then as they age for their a b to a C, so they tend to be newer, nicer communities is where we started out.

**Speaker 2** [00:13:11] Did I hear somewhere that you are experimenting with some alternatives for not having residential? I forget what you call the folks that live there, but on site off site, basically observing that role that might be able to service a little bit wider range of apartment types.

**Speaker 1** [00:13:27] Yeah. So one of the newer things over the last few years we've piloted is an offsite model where instead of the owner conceding a two bedroom unit to us, they have a higher management fee. And out of that, we pay an hourly wage to somebody who will provide services and sometimes for certain communities. They want somebody with a professional degree that's certified in social work, and so it'll actually be a pretty good paying salaried role. But in order to make that affordable, they would often serve more than one community. So typically we bundle three communities together in close proximity so that they could still get to each of the communities, meet the needs of residents and wouldn't spend all their time driving around and car.

**Speaker 4** [00:14:13] So I'd love to hear when you pitched this idea to an apartment building owner. What are some of the selling points or the ways that you demonstrate the value add that this brings?

**Speaker 1** [00:14:23] Can I just explain to them about how loneliness is not just a human problem, but it's a business problem and talk about residents not having a sense of rootedness? They immediately get that. And we have studies that show what's the tipping point in terms of the number of friends you need. And a number of years ago? Yeah. One of our close partners with an advisor is there, an economic research firm that works in the multifamily industry. They did a study called The Friendship Factor, and they found that if you have seven or more friends in apartment community, you're almost twice as likely to renew your lease as somebody with no friends. Wow. And that makes intuitive sense, I think, for most people. But when you can quantify that, they go, Wow, that makes a lot of sense. And so a lot of times will say, you know, if we can move your retention rate up by three to five percentage points, you can pretty quickly estimate what the savings are going to be in terms of turn cost because the average term cost for an apartment would be \$4000. So when someone moves out that part apartment sitting vacant for a certain amount of time not collecting rent, then you've got to have people come in and repaint it, change out the carpet, cleaned it up. They might have to do some kind of special to fill it. And so when you add up, all of this costs four thousand dollars every time they have somebody that leaves the apartment community. And so if you can just lower that turnover rate by just a few percentage points, that can translate into over \$100000 of value pretty quickly.

**Speaker 4** [00:15:56] Yeah, yeah. Have you have any stories of helping a property reposition itself almost because the retention rate has increased so much?

**Speaker 1** [00:16:05] Yeah, I mean, one of my favorite stories from Houston is this single mom that our team was going by to visit her one night and see if she was going to stick around and remove her lease. And they said, Hey, where are you? Think about stick around next year? And she's like, You know, I am not. I've had a spider infestation and they haven't been able to fix it. And I put money down on a new apartment and I'm so frustrated and I'm leaving. And the team's like, Oh man, we're so sorry to hear that we've really enjoyed getting to know you. And that evening, that single mom reached out to them via email. She's like, You know, I've been thinking about you guys ever since she swung back to that visit. And I've been thinking this is the kind of community I really want to raise my daughter in, will people really know their neighbors? And she goes, I want you to know

I let go of the deposit on the other place and I'm going to run in my place. So it really does work. That's awesome.

**Speaker 4** [00:17:02] Did the spider infestation get taking care of you?

**Speaker 1** [00:17:05] I imagine so.

**Speaker 4** [00:17:06] Yeah, I hope so. Yeah.

**Speaker 2** [00:17:17] Maybe this is a question coming from the northwest, but you know this this model Christian organization helping out build community and apartment buildings that might work in Texas, but in the northwest that there's going be a lot squeamishness about a Christian organization. What would you say to someone who had that kind of concern?

**Speaker 1** [00:17:33] We don't hide the fact that we're a faith based organization. You can read about it on our website, but we're very intentional about how we describe what we do. So all of our teams are trained in fair housing, and there's certain rules of engagement and any spiritual conversation they would have would always be in the context of a friendship and would always be very diplomatic. Kind of a two way conversation, not not a one way conversation. And so actually, we're quite popular in the Seattle area, in the Portland area.

**Speaker 2** [00:18:08] We've got that says something about your ministry or military style. Yeah, yeah.

**Speaker 1** [00:18:13] It's very incarnational, very relational. You're just moving into the neighborhood and loving people. And when you love people very well, eventually they're going to say, Why are you doing this? You know? Yeah. And it's just a natural opportunity to have a spiritual conversation.

**Speaker 2** [00:18:30] When you say fair housing, like, I'm guessing that your folks are trained not to pass judgment on lifestyle choices that they might not agree with or those kinds of things, is that part of what they're trying to be sensitive to?

**Speaker 1** [00:18:43] Fair housing was laws that were passed in the 60s, largely because of racial discrimination, but they include other classes as well and basically the posture as we want this to be a welcoming community for everyone from any kind of background. And so we tell our teams, you can't go around passing out leaflets, and if you do, it will warn you once that if you do it a second time, we'll fire you. We've done that on occasion where we have teams that just have a very different style. And it's not to say that that's wrong, but that's not the style that we're called to do. We've been serving the industry for 21 years. We've never had a fair housing claim against apartment life. So we're very, very careful, conscientious about it.

**Speaker 4** [00:19:27] The people that come to work for apartment life. What kind of trainings do you do with them or what type of people do you look for when you find those partners?

**Speaker 1** [00:19:38] Answer the first time, because that's the most important thing that we look for people that really want to love their neighbor and go the extra mile. So we're always praying for people who are spiritually mature, but also get the business side of

what we're doing. We call apartment life a business tree. It's a mash up of two words business and ministry.

**Speaker 2** [00:20:02] I love it. Yes.

**Speaker 1** [00:20:04] And that would be one of the key things that people who want to be coordinators need to be able to embrace both and not split and be all about one or all about the other. If we have a team that's really good at events and they're excellent on the business side, but they're never having any kind of spiritual impact, that would not be a success. And likewise, if you had a team that was really good about talking with people about Jesus, but they had crummy events, that's not good either. So you're always looking for people who can be integrated on both of those. A lot of our training really centers around those. In fact, the first 90 days, if it leans more heavily towards the business side. Yeah, because the business side gives us a valid business reason to be there in the first place. And if you're not doing the program with business excellence, when are you going to lose mission field? But the reason you're doing this is you want to have a platform for loving your neighbors to the point where they say, Why are you loving me? You know,

**Speaker 4** [00:21:03] that's really cool. Yeah, I think that's really cool, especially this season. We've been focusing a lot on this idea of. Right? So that holistic, robust picture of seeking the flourishing of communities. And I think that that's a really cool to see you are doing that of bringing the gospel as part of it, but also the really important part of being good business people, right? And that both of those things can be integrated together. So it's cool to hear about that. Yeah.

**Speaker 1** [00:21:29] Makes a difference when the company is paying for it. And we have a contractual obligation that makes you think differently than if you're purely a ministry. It's actually, I think, a very healthy thing.

**Speaker 2** [00:21:42] If I legitimates those contacts that are made, you know, it's not like this sort of creepy neighbor that's just trying to, you know, make some kind of connection. We don't know what it means, but when you've got an actual valid reason for I have a title, you know, I'm the I'm sorry, what do you call? The guy I should ask is, what do you call the folks who live there and do that?

**Speaker 1** [00:21:58] Yes. So the individuals we call coordinators and then two coordinators, we call a team, if it's a team, it means there's two coordinators. And in some cases, we'll have individual coordinators serve a community. That's pretty exceptional.

**Speaker 4** [00:22:15] Yeah. If they're introducing themselves to a resident, how do they introduce themselves?

**Speaker 1** [00:22:20] They would say, Hey, I'm your apartment, my team or I'm your apartment coordinator, OK? And you know, we live here in the community and here's what we do. Is there an off site coordinator that say, Hey, I'm your apartment life coordinator and I help coordinate events and services that community provide for you?

**Speaker 2** [00:22:37] I feel like that kind of thing happens on campuses, educational institutions all the time. You know, my wife and I were the community life coordinator for the place that we lived in. You know, we got low rent reduction and we put on parties and tried to connect people with each other. And yeah, the idea of doing it outside of an educational institutions really cool. Can you say a little more? I agree with you. It's super

important that this pencils out and it makes sense for the building owner. But I suspect that you guys are interested in more than just renewing of leases. You want to see these residents lives flourish in some way. Have you seen that having interaction with the apartment life coordinator it does bring flourishing to the residents that live there?

**Speaker 1** [00:23:18] It does it does on a number of levels. There are a lot of people who are just plain lonely and living in isolation. And I think this one community, I think it was in Phenix area, it was a transgender man who was living alone in his apartment community, very isolated. And the team went by to do a welcome visit one day, and that man barely cracked his door open by looking at Who are you? Why are you here? Yeah, but they they were persistent to care for him and to get involved in his life. And gradually it was kind of like you can picture the door, metaphorically speaking, getting wider and wider and wider open. And they had some great spiritual conversations with them. But I would say one of the things that really transformed his life is he got embedded in the community and they discovered that he was really good at cooking food. Yes, chef. And so he began to participate with them in hosting the events and preparing the food for the event. Wow. And before long, this guy who was up to that point, like a complete recluse actually was one of the stars of of all the events in the community and had people rallied around him. And he's like, That's because of you guys. And so you'll see it in very simple ways like that. But then sometimes even more dramatic and profound ways. Story of a maintenance guy in San Antonio who was getting ready to take his life. And it just so happened that the team up by that night to check on him to see how he was doing. Had no idea that he was planning to take his life that night. And then he decided after they left. I'm not going to do it tonight. Wow. And a couple of weeks later, he ends up in church and has a very dramatic experience with God, and his life was radically changed. So much so that he told the apartment life team, because I want to talk to your CEO, I want to tell my story. Wow. And it was truly incredible and an honor to hear his story.

**Speaker 2** [00:25:29] So I want to ask a question that I don't know if you have an answer, but we think a lot about the built environment, so it's kind of the structure of neighborhoods and that walkable neighborhoods. Do you have any sense that the work of apartment life has an impact on the neighborhood in which the buildings are located? Or does it feel like it's mostly just within the building that you can track?

**Speaker 1** [00:25:48] I would say in your suburban garden style communities, most of what happens within the apartment life program would take place in that little city within a city and that town within the city. But in the more urban areas, a lot of our coordinators will say, Hey, let's all meet at the pub down the street. Yeah. And so there is engagement beyond just your immediate building and getting people out. And that's a way to be a blessing to the local pubs and restaurants in the area about to send them business and to and to create that sense of neighborliness beyond just that apartment community.

**Speaker 2** [00:26:29] Yeah, at our local church here in Tacoma, we've got one of the highest residential densities in the county, right around the church, a lot of apartment buildings around here. And I am also on the Business District Association with a lot of pubs and coffee shops and restaurants and both. That's from the church standpoint and the business standpoint. We're all trying to crack that nut of how do we get these folks to leave their apartment and come into our community and maybe find a place in the church or maybe get a meal at the restaurant or we're yeah, we're we're all thinking about that. So that's part of what I think excites me about the potential of the ministry like yours that it can. I think when people I was the book we read last in our last season, Sarah Joy was a happy city by Charles Montgomery. We were on the when he talked about a study that



showed that in a college campus that when the dorm was arranged in a certain way that enhanced community, those folks were more likely to connect on campus as well. Once that once that kind of opened up, they were more open to relationships and connecting within the place they lived extended out into that their wider reach. And that's where that question is coming from and try to figure out if you know, getting people less lonely. Getting those seven friendships going in your building is going to change how you interact with your neighborhood as well.

**Speaker 1** [00:27:42] Well, one of our former board members, his name is Steve Chesnut. He's the CEO of Street Lights Residential. When he builds his apartment communities, he intentionally built some in such a way that they foster a sense of community. Yeah. So there's elements like a dog park or some other things that would naturally draw residents together so that they'd have an occasion to meet each other.

**Speaker 2** [00:28:04] I know Charles Montgomery talks a lot about design elements in apartment buildings that are better and worse for community.

**Speaker 4** [00:28:10] We talked a little bit about the people that come to work with you all and some of the trainings and the type of people that you're looking for. Are you working with churches to find those people or what's the connection with the local church?

**Speaker 1** [00:28:24] Yeah, thank you. That's a very important distinction. So we are very church centric in the way we go about our ministry. And so we were a cart, require all of our teams to be tied into a local church in good standing when we go to a new market, that is our first way that we will network as full network with local pastors in the area and say, here's what we do and we really want to help you engage with these people who are in your parish. Yeah, in a sense, these are your mission fields, not ours. And we're just a vehicle for you as a local church to administer to people in your community. So that's the way we posture it over time, as we become more established in our communities, our best teams come from other teams. And so it'll be people and their Sunday school class or their small group that are wired just like them. And that's often where the second and third generation of important coordinators will come from.

**Speaker 4** [00:29:18] That's awesome. That's really cool.

**Speaker 2** [00:29:21] One question is, how do you find those teams? But I guess the other question is how do you find your way into the various apartment buildings? I mean, what do they come to you or do you reach out to them?

**Speaker 1** [00:29:30] It can happen both ways. So a lot of times will happen as we'll meet with an ownership group and they're like, Hey, we love what you're doing. And we've enjoyed you serving us over here. We've got a community that can really use your help, and it's in a new market. And so sometimes that's the way will expand to a new market or a new area of town. But the other way it can happen is sometimes we'll have pastors reach out to us. Who had a pastor in Oklahoma City a couple of years ago reached out and said, Hey, I'm looking at all these apartment communities that are going up all around my church teeming with people. And I'm thinking, who in the world is reaching these people for Jesus? And he goes, Would you guys ever come to Oklahoma City? And I said, Absolutely, but we need to know some apartment owners and savior as well. The only apartment owner I know is the former mayor of the city, but let me see what he thinks. And so just happened that the former mayor and led to Christ at a Billy Graham crusade and love what we were doing and. Now we're in Oklahoma City.

**Speaker 2** [00:30:29] That's awesome.

**Speaker 4** [00:30:30] Well, so that makes me think I worked with several churches who are next door to new real estate development projects going up right, and that's been a question repeatedly and working with these churches is how do we get connected to these new residents, to this new building ownership? All of that. And I work to try to facilitate some of those connections and relationships for them sometimes. But that seems like that would be a really great opportunity for them to maybe even be able to connect with you all and connect that to the building owner as an option to can be considering. Do you ever have churches also, I guess, like pay for you all work to be in the building? Or is that always held by the building owner?

**Speaker 1** [00:31:10] We need to be there at the request of the management company and the owner so we can work with the church in partnership with the owner, but not without the owner. But what we have developed that would help any church do what we do without a business model is we've developed the missional living curriculum specifically for the local church. Oh, interesting. It could apply to any community, but it's specifically designed for the realities of apartment living. And we walk them through our model of Care Connect call. That's what how we talk about what we do. We care for people, we connect them and vital relationships, including our relationship with God in the local church, and we call others to do the same. And so we have a national living curriculum that's available for free for any church that wants to use it. And if we can't, for whatever reason, get in there officially with a business opportunity that the church can piggyback on, there's nothing that would stop them from using the national living curriculum.

**Speaker 4** [00:32:11] Yeah, that's really great.

**Speaker 2** [00:32:13] So one of the things we're observing is there seems to be a kind of demographic shift in terms of what people are choosing and also other kind of economic reasons. But it seems like more and more people are wanting to live in multifamily situations, are liking the vibrancy of a city or a walkable community. So they're choosing that their dream isn't to go way out into the suburbs and have a lot of space, but they want to live in a dense community. So it seems like, if that's true, that you are on the cutting edge of some really strategic work for the kingdom. If that's where a lot of young people and a lot of retired people are kind of choosing that, it seems like there's a ton of potential for ministry opportunity that's that's just around the corner that maybe the church as a whole hasn't quite caught up with. But you guys are, like I said, on the cutting edge, would you agree with that? What do you see from your angle?

**Speaker 1** [00:33:01] Yeah, I'd say ever since the 2007 2008 housing crisis that the nation went through and really the whole world went through apartments have become more and more popular. Yeah. And it's across age groups. It's not just the younger people, but as you mentioned, even the older, retired empty nesters are moving into apartments as well. Homeownership has actually dropped in the last decade, but apartments continue to be on the rise, so it's a good investment for apartment owners. But nationally, it's a very strategic audience for the church to be thinking about. Yeah.

**Speaker 2** [00:33:36] I mean, are you guys growing in terms of places? You are having programs and go on. It seems like just look at your website, it seems like you've got a West Coast coordinator, East Coast coordinator. It seems like a growing organization. Are you seeing what your ministry blossom right now?

**Speaker 1** [00:33:49] Yeah. So when I came in in 2015, we were and maybe three 380s, three nineties, and then last year we finished 2020 at 601 communities. So we've increased quite a bit in the last few years, and some of that is actually expansion into the northwest. There's been some big partnerships we made with Community Northwest. It's like a sister ministry that was doing some similar things and they came under the umbrella of apartment life. So there is a little bit of that, but there's also a lot of organic growth that's been happening.

**Speaker 2** [00:34:21] Yeah, I just I'd love to see you guys. I know you may already have stuff going on to come home, and I'd love to see more growth right here in my neighborhood. We would love that

**Speaker 4** [00:34:29] you could buy an apartment building, Eric. Yeah, and get that going. Yeah.

**Speaker 2** [00:34:33] The apartment across the street, I think, just went, Yeah, there you go. No little pricey. But yeah, the real estate keeps getting more and more expensive around here.

**Speaker 4** [00:34:39] So I think what's so beautiful about your model is it really leans on the hospitality of Jesus as well, which we have. It's such a good example in the Bible, and I think we failed to take advantage of that as Christians and really live into that hospitality sometimes. It's really fascinating to hear what

**Speaker 1** [00:34:57] you are doing in that regard. Yeah, and the ministry doesn't have to be much more complicated than setting an extra table setting at your table to invite somebody over for dinner. Yeah, it's it's really that simple. As we think about the next 50 years, we have a 50 year vision for apartment life, and one of the things we'd like to be able to do is to be able to serve any church or apartment community in the world. And so we're contemplating what would it look like to take apartment life to other places internationally? We've started to expand into Canada, and I think later this month we'll have our first team in the United Kingdom and we even have some owners in the Netherlands who've reached out who are very interested in bringing apartment life to the mainland of Europe. While we think about the future, it would be exciting to be able to truly serve in a church or apartment community in the world.

**Speaker 2** [00:35:48] Do you feel like that's not happening internationally as far as you know? I mean, it's such a great idea, but is that not happening in those various markets?

**Speaker 1** [00:35:55] Well, it goes back to your question earlier about condominiums. And so what you see and a lot of the world is people do live and multifamily communities, but they're more of the condo model where somebody will build a huge highrise building and then individual families will buy each of the units. So it's cracking the code on how do you serve condos that if we can do that in the US, that translates into most, any other country around the world. Yeah. So anyways, what you asked earlier was very insightful question. And if we're able to figure that out, it really does open up the whole world.

**Speaker 2** [00:36:30] Well, yeah, I think that condo thing gets it. The other piece of it you had mentioned the crash in housing market 2007 seven, one of the drivers for people choosing apartments. But I also think that people who aren't negatively impacted by the economy or who have the means to choose otherwise are choosing to live in cities and

what condo life is attractive for a lot of populations. But it presents ministry challenges because there's a lot of industry around, you know, talking to people in your front yard and while you're doing yard work and whatnot. But there's not a lot of natural places to connect with people if they're living in a multi-family situation. And so through the kind of work you guys are doing, I think just has tons of potential for resourcing pastors and helping us continue the great commission in a changing demographics situation. Absolutely. Yeah. You know, a lot of our listeners are pastors. Is there something you wish? Masters knew based on what you've learned in the last five years, some may be thinking about.

**Speaker 1** [00:37:27] I think one thing passengers may be surprised to know is what our biggest challenges, our biggest challenge is not actually selling to a secular client. Our biggest challenge is actually finding more coordinators for the open communities that we have. We're serving 600 communities right now that easily we have 130 140 open communities right now that if we had the coordinators for them, we could be at 700 plus apartment communities around the country. Yeah.

**Speaker 2** [00:38:00] And I would bet you're right that pastors could be key to finding those folks if they knew how to pitch it and they had a vision for the potential there. You could really help that. So.

**Speaker 4** [00:38:09] So hopefully through this podcast, we'll land a few for you.

**Speaker 1** [00:38:13] Maybe that would be fantastic.

**Speaker 4** [00:38:15] How do people get in touch with you if they have somebody that they think would make a good coordinator if they say, Hey, we want to know more and how do we get involved and help in this mission?

**Speaker 1** [00:38:25] They can reach out to me by email at Pete Kelly, Petite Kheyli at Apartment Price, dot org. And I'd be glad to connect them to the right person that any pastor listening to this, if they're like, Hey, I'd be interested to know, is there an open apartment community waiting for a team near me that reach out? We can let you know.

**Speaker 2** [00:38:49] That's awesome. We'll put that email on the show notes. If that's all right. Definitely.

**Speaker 1** [00:38:54] That'd be fantastic.

**Speaker 2** [00:38:55] Well, thank you so much for your time today. It's been really great talking to you and get to know more about apartment life. I'm just so excited about what you're doing and just the potential to where you're going with this. So I'm excited for our listeners to know about this.

**Speaker 4** [00:39:08] Yeah, we appreciate it. Good to have you on.

**Speaker 1** [00:39:11] Wonderful meeting both of you.

**Speaker 5** [00:39:21] What an amazing Christian vision for loving people, cultivating sociality, the community people need and crave in creating a natural opportunity for inviting people to follow Jesus. All of that, plus a sustainable business model that supports the work my apartment life be blessed the way it's tribe grow empowerment life exemplifies one of the key messages of this podcast Broad space even well-designed space, which is

very important in something we strongly advocate for, does not become a place rich for human flourishing and to people interact that space with other people in intentional and particular ways that are conducive to making and sustaining thriving communities and living good lives. An apartment complex by providing four walls for housing is a good thing. At a base level. But if people are living lonely lives or struggling with a big life transition behind closed doors. An apartment complex is not reaching its potential as a place of Shalom. Then in steps, people bringing the warmth, the hospitality and caring to intentionally build the fabric of community in an apartment complex and life starts to abound, space becomes a place for real apartment living. The place where we feel we're loved and belong to a network of relationships. Seven Friend relationships and what takes, according to Peter's research. They feel rooted in a place. I love this fundamental approach to place placemaking and shalom. The new parish movement applies the same good old fashioned approach to being the church only it encourages pastors, churches and Christians to scale it up from an apartment complex to a whole neighborhood and to loving every part of it with God's love, the people, the parks, the street, the housing, the schools, the businesses, the plants and wildlife department, life is an encouragement to the church to do likewise. That is to bring Shalom to the neighborhood through intentional acts of caring and place making. Grab their manual for churches, digest it and start using it. Bob here is despite as we are, if you have a story to share about how your church is doing neighborhood life, please don't hesitate to share that with us. Thanks for listening.

**Speaker 3** [00:41:53] Thanks for tuning in to another episode of the Embedded Church podcast. Be sure to check out the episode show notes for links to resources and other helpful information related to this episode. If you'd like to connect with us to share comments or ideas about the work we're doing, we'd love to hear from you. You can send us an email at [Info@EmbeddedChurch.com](mailto:Info@EmbeddedChurch.com) or leave a voice message on our feedback line by dialing seven six zero five two seven three two six zero. Follow us on Instagram. Embedded Church podcast or visit our website. [www.thatembeddedchurch.com](http://www.thatembeddedchurch.com). Finally, thank you to our season four partners at Ormond Center and to all of our faithful listeners and supporters who have helped us make it to season four. We are honored and encouraged. Until next time, be well.