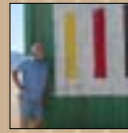




Planting a church
in Downtown
Kansas City
PAGE TWO



International
Student Ministry
Conference
PAGE THREE



Evergreen
Churches and
Missions
PAGE THREE



Meet the Pastor:
Tim Haring
PAGE FOUR



CHRISTIANITY IN *action*

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CHANGING LIVES



GEORGE SLY

After coming to the faith on November 5, 2005, I started to volunteer at Urban Connections. This is a ministry that I found through my home church, New Song Community Church, a Great Commission church.

Urban Connections (UC) envisions its neighborhood as a community

holistically transformed by God, and characterized by stability, justice, opportunity, and rich faith in Christ. I grew up in the inner city of Pittsburgh, PA, so it was a culture to which I could relate. The people of the inner city can be like those walls that were broken down and burned in Nehemiah 1:3. Jesus had a heart for the crowds in the city and had compassion on them (Matthew 9:36). UC tries to model this compassion.

I felt that if I was going to truly serve this neighborhood, I had to become a part of it. After all, the Word became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14). After some time and a great deal of prayer, my wife and I agreed to move our family to the near-east side of Columbus, Ohio in order to serve alongside UC.

I currently serve on the Board of Trustees as Vice President for UC, and my family and I volunteer our time with the ministry. I have another ministry called Pray & Play, which is an outreach ministry to inner city men and women between the ages of 18-34. Prayerfully, as time goes on, more disciples will be cultivated and catch the vision for our neighborhood.

For more information, contact George at george@urban-connections.org.

JORDAN MONSON

There is considerable uncertainty that has crept through the minds of many aspiring missionaries: Do I need to be called to go into mission work? What is even considered a "calling?"

I've been there. I wanted an objective and specific calling, but I realized that God would not slip a post-it under my door with an assigned people-group and language.

Of course it would be absurd for one not to forgive another until he felt he had a specific calling from God to do so. I was acting the same way regarding the Great Commission—as if some are called to it and others are not. Scripture makes it clear that we're all called to forgive. Scripture also makes it clear that we're all to obey the Great Commission.

I began to realize that Christ calls us all to the Great Commission, whether we stay or go. I was informed about a future church planting effort in Pamplona, Spain. I sought counsel, and realized that as a Spanish speaker, God could use me in Spain in ways that many of my brothers in Minneapolis couldn't be used, and that those brothers could easily fill my shoes if I were to go.

Scripture was all the calling I needed to jump on board in the Great Commission. I don't have a romantic Martin Luther lighting bolt story. I don't think we need one either. A Bible and a map will do just fine.



MISSION USA

NEW CHURCH PLANTS

CROSSROADS CHURCH: KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI

By AJ Vanderhorst

Crossroads Church Kansas City began as five people meeting in a loft apartment in fall 2008. We had no money, no facility, no huge sending church, and clearly, no large team—so we prayed a lot.

Our heart was to see a church take root in downtown Kansas City, home to 17,000 people. Over eight billion dollars had been invested in restored infrastructure, but the gospel had little presence downtown.

The next year was a crazy collage of strategizing, fundraising, and team-building. My home church, Cornerstone Community Church, came on board as

a partner. By fall 2009, we were living near downtown, hosting team meetings, meeting our neighbors, and learning our culture like missionaries. Young professionals and artists are the common threads here. That fall, the director of a large studio and gallery building invited us to use their space to start a service.

In the months since, we have been learning how to live all of life on mission with Jesus. The Crossroads community has grown slowly and steadily, meeting in homes, serving downtown, and spending time with non-Christian friends. To our great joy, several who were far from God are now following Jesus.

Our prayer is that as we enjoy life with



A Crossroads church service.

Jesus and offer it to others, we'll see downtown Kansas City transformed by the landmarks of the gospel—prayer, preaching, living life together, conversions (Acts 2).

Check out Crossroads Church Kansas City at www.crossroadschurchkc.com.

GRACE HARBOR COMMUNITY CHURCH: CINCINNATI, OHIO

By Larry Kinkopf

"And the king granted them to me because the good hand of my God was on me" (Nehemiah 2:8). Nehemiah's explanation for his success before the king truly describes the formation of our new GCC church plant in Cincinnati—God's "good hand" has been upon us!

Our church planting core group of over 60 people has been meeting together since February 2010. One by one, each family on the team came to realize that they were being led by God to join in this venture. For many, it is the first church plant in which they have been involved. What an exciting and scary journey it has been! Many have stepped into leadership roles they never imagined filling just

a few months ago, and they are flourishing in God's grace. One of the greatest outcomes of stepping out in faith for our core has been getting to know God and His faithfulness firsthand. After moving locations twice already, we have ended up in a local elementary school, and are preparing to welcome newcomers for our official launch date in the spring.

Our church was founded on seeking direction from God through prayer and scripture. We recently completed 21 days of prayer and fasting as a church, focusing on "hearing God's voice and aligning our lives with God." What a blessing to draw near to God and heighten our sensitivity to His Spirit. In addition, our discipleship process



Grace Harbor's church service.

involves a simple four-fold strategy – to reach people for Christ, grow together in our faith, equip people to serve, and send them on mission. Please pray that God will continue to supply all the resource needs we have as we reach the "sheep without a Shepherd" in northern Cincinnati.

Check out Grace Harbor Community Church at www.graceharborchurch.net.

INTERNATIONAL



2011 INTERNATIONAL STUDENT MINISTRY CONFERENCE

By Jim Wiebelhaus

The first International Student Ministry (ISM) Conference was in May 2008.

The vision for the conference was two-fold: First, to equip one another with better ministry-understanding and skills for ISM. Second, to affirm the strategic mission opportunity to make disciples among the 700,000 international students studying in the U.S., and then take that vision back to our churches.

Fourteen churches have been involved in the conference over the last three years. Former international students, volunteers and staff, are some of the key speakers at these conferences. These conferences are helping GCC churches to fulfill our part of the Great Commission in our lifetime by praying and working towards:

- More churches to start and staff ISMs.
- For an integration of the vision of churches with an ISM to overseas mission work that will result in creation of new mission endeavors and eventual church plants.
- Plant new churches on campuses where there are good graduate programs for international students.
- Plant churches in key cities in the U.S. and overseas where international students can get jobs and stay united with GCC churches.
- Continue development of web tools as a means of connecting, equipping and sending workers into international ministry.



This year's ISM Conference is May 13-14 in Lincoln, NE, and the cost is only \$10. For more information on this conference, visit <http://www.harvest-ne.org/ism>.

EVERGREEN COMMUNITY CHURCHES & MISSIONS

By Mark Darling

Evergreen Community Church officially started in June of 1988. There are now five church locations working to reach Minneapolis and other parts of the world. Here is a brief overview of how each is working to fulfill the Great Commission.

Evergreen-Bloomington & Urban Refuge: While there have been many trips to Honduras, the churches have directed their focus to Haiti. The congregations have rallied together in order to set up food assembly factories in their buildings to package meals that will eventually be delivered to Haitian orphanages and schools, where the students in those schools will hear the gospel. Between both locations, almost 2,700,000 meals have been delivered!

Evergreen-Lakeville: Lakeville has been sending mission trips to Italy and Venezuela. The church has also sent teams on medical mission trips to La

Ceiba, Honduras, and will also be starting a food assembly factory in the Lakeville building to send meals to Latin America.

Evergreen-New Hope: This location has been sending short-term mission trips to El Salvador and also to Kenya, where a Wycliffe missionary couple is now serving. It was also the New Hope church that sent missionaries and gave generously in order to start The Rock Berlin in Germany. This church has also pioneered efforts to reach Africa as well.

The Rock: This location has focused trips to Latin America and Germany, and has sent missionaries to Spain, El Salvador, and Mexico. The Rock has sent several house churches on various domestic short-term mission trips over the last four years.



Left: A Lakeville missionary with children from Venezuela. Right: A missionary stands with a shipping container filled with meals packed by The Urban Refuge.

Overall, the Evergreen churches have been incredible examples in making financial sacrifices to support missionaries and ministries all over the world, and in sending men and women to labor for the gospel.

Check out the Evergreen churches at www.evergreenc.com.

INSIDE GCC

PASTORS CONFERENCE

JUNE 13-15: INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA
"REACHING THE NEXT GENERATION"



As evangelicals in America, we are losing the battle of passing on a meaningful, authentic, committed faith to the next generation. In Psalm 78:1-8, we discover that God has a great passion and desire for His people to pass on the faith to the next generation of children...and not just our

own, but to those lost around us in our nations.

This year, the Pastors Conference will be a time for you and your key leaders to freshly hear from God—to see what He is laying on our hearts to pray and strive for over the next ten years, so that we may, indeed, reach the next generation for Jesus Christ.

For information on how to register, log on to:
www.gccweb.org/conferences/Pastors-Conference-2011.

MEET A GCC PASTOR

THIS EDITION: TIM HARING



Tim moved to Morgantown, WV, about 25 years ago to help start Chestnut Ridge Church in Morgantown, WV. Since that time, three additional churches and a campus ministry have been started in West Virginia. Tim has regional and national responsibilities with Great Commission Churches. His education includes degrees

from Moody Bible Institute and West Virginia University. He and his wife, Karen, of 22 years have five children.

Verse: *1 Corinthians 1:26-29 - Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him.*

Advice: "Stay the course; don't give up. People often throw in the towel just before they would have experienced a breakthrough had they persevered."

THE MANIFOLD GRACE OF GOD

JOHN HOPLER - DIRECTOR, GREAT COMMISSION CHURCHES



"As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (1 Peter 4:10).

I love this verse—especially the phrase "the manifold grace of God." God's grace—His favor, His power, His kindness—is indeed manifold and diverse. God's blessings come to us in unique and creative ways—surprising ways that are more marvelous than can be described.

And, as this verse indicates, God's manifold grace comes through the special working of God's people as they use their gifts for service. Members of Great Commission churches, like all followers of Jesus Christ, are using their spiritual gifts to demonstrate the glory of God—serving in urban areas, working with international students, starting churches in the United States and overseas.

As believers in Jesus Christ, we have received the grace of God in fullest measure. Now, as good stewards of His grace, let us all join together in serving one another and all people, so that the grace of Jesus Christ might spread throughout the world.



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