

THE CHICAGO CONNECTION

Connecting Chicago disciples with each other, the Midwest and the world

www.chicagochurch.org

June 4, 2006

The Call to Evangelism

The question as to when the Chicago Church of Christ will break out in an evangelistic resurgence, one marked by vast numbers of baptisms and restored souls, is one of eminent significance to the evangelists within the church. It is our charge as evangelists to preach the Word and see its power manifested in the form of many people throughout our great city receiving the forgiveness of their sins and having their hearts captivated by God's grace. And it is with deep conviction that we embrace the message from God that was delivered to the prophet Isaiah concerning His powerful Word whenever it is preached: *"It will not return empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it."* (Isaiah 55:11)

With this promise in view, the 12 evangelists of the Chicago Church meet at least once a month to discuss and devise plans for how best to create avenues and open doors for God to grow His church. The time and energy devoted to these gatherings is well spent and allows us to articulate how to best enact our mission to *"...never stop teaching and proclaiming that Jesus is the Christ"* and also reminds us of our stated vision this year to see that *"God produces fruit in each house church."* It is also indicative of our passion and pursuit to see our world, both locally and globally, won for Christ. In this, there has been great victory and the undeniable effects of God's hand moving within our fellowship this year.

To date, there have been more than 50 baptisms and restorations within the Chicago Church of Christ. While there has been much to celebrate thus far, the good news is only mounting. The Chicago ministry staff as a whole does not have enough time during its meetings to discuss all of the good news happening within our fellowship. This good news is so evidently precipitated by God's own hand that there can be little doubt as to the great plans He

has for our family of believers here in Chicago in the near future.

While we as evangelists are honored to lead the church in this evangelistic thrust, it is with great eagerness and anticipation that we await the arrival of yet another evangelist and women's ministry leader to the Chicago

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Church of Christ to help us in this cause. We are grateful to God that Dave and Kathy Eastman will be arriving this summer to begin leading the Central Region. When Tomm and Laurie Wilson felt called by God to move to Milwaukee and serve the Milwaukee Church of Christ and lead that

ministry, the Central Region was left without full-time leadership. To help meet the many needs of the region, Roger and Marcia Lamb volunteered to help fill the void. Additionally, many from within the region took it upon themselves to help carry the additional burden. In this effort, there has been much to commend and admire.

Not only do the evangelists feel compelled to keep the evangelistic call upon the hearts of all of us in Chicago, to do what we can to add souls to God's church locally, we also must do what we can to help churches around the world in that same pursuit. During the Midwest Conference in April, it became abundantly clear that the Christians who attended were greatly moved by the tremendous work going on in Eurasia, as specifically discussed by two of our Ukrainian brothers during that weekend. The Chicago Church is bound by ties of love and affection to the congregations residing in that area of the world. Thus, it is with great anticipation that we await the Eurasian mission's contribution this June. Our stated goal as a congregation is to raise \$500,000. We must all pray and plead with God that we will achieve this goal so that further mission's work can advance in that part of our world.

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First to the Lord 2006 Special Missions Contribution

*And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves **first to the Lord** and then to us in keeping with God's will. So we urged Titus, since he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part. But just as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us—see that you also excel in this grace of giving.*
(2 Corinthians 8:5-7)

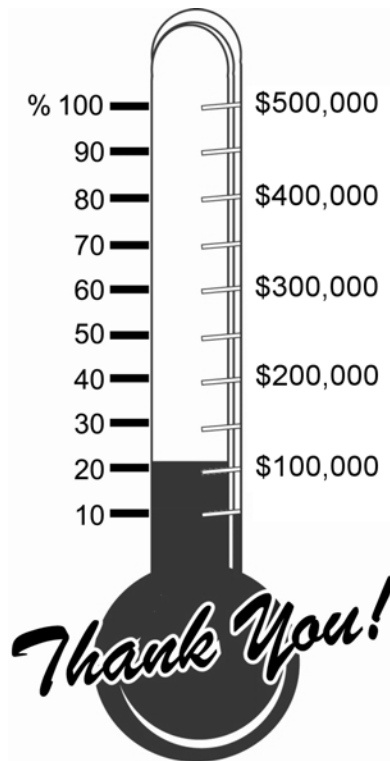
It is so inspiring to read in the Bible how the Macedonian churches were commended, not just for their giving, but for giving themselves first to the Lord! Out of their struggle and poverty, they gave above and beyond what they could to meet various needs in Jerusalem. As the elders of the flock here in the Chicago Church, we are asking you to embrace this same type of heart and imitate the faith of the Macedonians in regard to next week's mission's contribution. We encourage you to give in this same manner and, in doing so, help all of the churches in Eurasia to meet their current needs and give each of them ample resources to aid their efforts of saving as many as possible. **(1 Corinthians 9:27)**

Various disciples in the Chicago Church have been privileged to visit some of our brothers and sisters in Eurasia recently. Randy and Patsy Harris visited the disciples in Kiev last year, Jeff Balsom and Tony Singh visited Kiev this past February, Dale and Shannon Lutz, along with their children, visited Kiev in March, and Jeff and Janet Jones and their three children just returned from a week-long visit to the churches in Kiev and Moscow. These opportunities to create and strengthen relationships have deeply bonded us to the various ministries in Eurasia. Recently, Nadya and Igor, a couple in the Kiev Church, wrote the following note to Jeff Balsom: *"We are grateful to God for His mercy and love to our family which we are sure from God. We are happy to have this privilege in life. Thank you for coming to Kiev and inspire us to make glory to God."* That note could have been written to all of us in the Chicago Church because they are very grateful for the money and love we have provided, support that has enabled them not only to become Christians, but also to grow in their faith in so many ways. No doubt their

feelings of gratitude echo those of all 8,000 disciples in the 37 churches throughout Eurasia.

The relationships we are forming with the disciples in Eurasia not only provide encouragement and strength for them, but truly they are benefiting all of us here in Chicago as well. To have Aleksei Kravets and Pavel Golub here for the conference in April was both bonding and inspiring. Many have shared with us that Aleksei's communion message on Easter Sunday was one that will not soon be forgotten, a message that moved the hearts of many. We can all look forward to our future relationship with the Eurasian brothers and sisters and the mutual encouragement we will receive from one another.

The monies provided by the Chicago Church will be given to the Eurasian Mission Organization, a missionary group that was formed here in Illinois in 2003 for the express purpose of developing and maintaining Christian programs designed to facilitate spiritual and material support for Eurasian churches in our fellowship. Please be sure to go to the website (www.eurasianmissions.org) and look at the pictures of the people in Eurasia and watch the videos of our brothers and sisters there in order to better prepare your heart for the gift you will be offering to the Lord next week. Truly, the internet is an incredible tool to help us in connecting our hearts with theirs, and these videos can be used to help each of us be better prepared and more inspired to offer our gift.



Our goal as a congregation is to collect \$500,000 to support this great work. This amount constitutes about seven times our weekly contribution and it will be to the glory of God when we give it. Brothers and sisters, let's give

ourselves first to the Lord and then to our extended family in the Eurasian churches. Let's continue to allow our plenty to provide for their needs, and let's use the resources we have been blessed by God to possess to build and strengthen the churches in Eurasia.

The Elders of the Chicago Church of Christ

Reviews and Previews

Women's Inspiration Day

A Women's Inspiration Day entitled, *The Best is Yet to Come*, will be held Saturday, June 24th at Bryan Middle School in Elmhurst from 10:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m. The purpose of this event is to provide inspiration, teaching and fellowship to the women of the church and their guests. A dessert reception will follow.

Golf Tournament

Our first annual Golf Tournament will be held Saturday, June 17th beginning at 2:00 p.m. Teams of four will play a scramble format at the beautiful Coyote Run Golf Course in Flossmoor. The cost is \$65 per person and includes 18 holes of golf, a cart, dinner and prizes. To register, see your regional representative.

North Region

Eric & Sheila Relph

Jennifer and Sheila have been long-time friends. Though they were both from the Philippines, they first met in Bahrain where they each had moved several years ago in search of a better life. In Bahrain, they even worked together for the same employer. While working in Bahrain, Jennifer was met by disciples in the Bahrain Church and was invited to attend a church service there. She studied the Bible and became a disciple shortly thereafter. Around the same time, Mike Castillo was in the Navy and stationed in Bahrain. He also was met by disciples, studied the Bible and became a Christian. In the Bahrain Church, Mike and Jennifer got to know each other, started dating and got married in 2003. In the meantime, Sheila met a young man named Eric Relph, who was also stationed in Bahrain with the Navy. They also got to know each other, dated for a while and later got married. Not too long after they were married, Eric and his new wife Sheila were relocated to Japan. They lived there until Eric got word that he was being transferred to Tennessee. However, as the day approached for them to leave, Eric and Sheila were moved to the naval base in Great Lakes, Illinois instead.

While Eric and Sheila were off to Illinois, Mike and Jennifer were enjoying their new life as newlyweds and as disciples in the Bahrain Church. They remained there until Mike was reassigned to the naval base in Great Lakes as well. Amazingly, Jennifer and Sheila kept in contact with each other during this time. When Sheila found out that Jennifer and her husband Mike were moving to Illinois, she was super excited because it meant she was going to have the opportunity to meet up with an old friend and rekindle their friendship, even though she knew nothing at the time about Jennifer's new life in Christ. The first thing Sheila did when Mike and Jennifer landed in Illinois was to call Jennifer. This whole time, independent of her and her husband's knowledge, God was hard at work on their behalf, doing all He could to provide them not only with a friendship for this life, but one that would last for eternity.

Not too long after their arrival, Mike and Jennifer invited Eric and Sheila to visit the North Region of the Chicago Church where they were now attending. Within a short period of time, upon Jennifer's invitation, Sheila began to study the Bible with some of the sisters and was later baptized. Eric was very excited for his wife and visited the church with her on a consistent basis for about a year. Yet he never felt the need to study the Bible himself. During that time, however, he developed great friendships with some of the brothers in the region and became very involved in one of the house churches there. God used that time in a big way to work on Eric's heart until he became aware of his own need for a relationship with Him. Finally, when he was asked by some of the brothers a few months ago to study the Bible, he didn't just agree, he was eager, humble and very grateful for the opportunity. Eric was baptized two weeks ago and was united in Christ with his wife, Sheila. Without a doubt, the words of Paul to the men and women of Athens in the first century have really proven to be true in the lives of Mike and Jennifer Castillo and Eric and Sheila Relph: *"From one man He made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and He determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek Him and reach out for Him, and perhaps find Him, though He is not far from each of us."* (Acts 17:26-27)

**Conversion
Corner**

Welcome New Baptisms!

Central

- Nathan Negrette

Metro

- Adriana Garcia
- Jose Herrera
- Latonya Lane

North

- Eric Relph

Chicago

- Moji Owolabi
- Marcus Stollenwerck

Northwest

- Diana Hunter

Southland

- Denae Ivy
- Chris Scheffler

The Call to Evangelism (Cont.)

(Continued from page 1)

Our mission to seek and save the lost endures within everything we do. We would all have been better suited for an existence in heaven right from the moment we were baptized except for one crucial thing—there are so many

commission Jesus passed down to His disciples, which they in turn passed down to others. And we must continue to pray that God will use us to change the world.

From the Scriptures...

- ✦ You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. (**Matthew 5:14**)
- ✦ Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. (**Mark 16:15**)
- ✦ The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest field. (**Luke 10:2**)
- ✦ You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. (**John 16:16**)
- ✦ Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ. (**Acts 5:42**)
- ✦ Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. (**Acts 8:4**)
- ✦ So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there. (**Acts 17:17**)
- ✦ We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us. (**2 Corinthians 5:20**)
- ✦ Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone. (**Colossians 4:5-6**)
- ✦ Through Jesus, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that confess His name. (**Hebrews 13:15**)
- ✦ . . . that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light. (**1 Peter 2:9**)

As we look at the first century church and what God accomplished through them—from the day of Pentecost through the other recorded testimony in the Book of Acts—we have to understand that all these events took place upon the efforts of men and women who strove with all their hearts to see Christ proclaimed. None of these inspired events were serendipitous—they were fought for, sought for and achieved by passionate evangelism and the shedding of many tears in prayer. We would be poor ambassadors for Christ if we did not hold ourselves to their example of love and passion.

The church must continue to preach Christ and proclaim the gospel. Each Christian must strive to hear God's call and see the avenues He is trying to open within all of our lives to share our faith. While there is still a great need for courage and boldness in our evangelism, there is also a pressing need for each of us to develop and maintain a deep love and concern for the lost. It is not the Christian who sees an opportunity to share the gospel but then gives in to fear that is troublesome—it's the Christian who refuses to feel compassion for the lost souls around them who has a real problem. When we no longer have a thought for the lost in the world, and when we no longer have the desire to help, our hearts will quickly grow cold.

The evangelists are in consistent prayer that this never becomes the case for any Christian in the Chicago Church. The Word of God must be, for all disciples, the catalyst to act and speak. Jeremiah speaks of this godly compulsion at a time in his life when he was growing weary of the affects that preaching God's word was having upon his personal life: *I am ridiculed all day long; everyone mocks me. Whenever I speak, I cry out proclaiming violence and destruction. So the word of the Lord has brought me insult and reproach all day long. But if I say, "I will not mention Him or speak any more in His name," His word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed, I cannot.* (**Jeremiah 20:8-9**)

Like Jeremiah, we cannot remain silent or submit ourselves to indifference. Let us continue in God's Word, fueling a firestorm of evangelistic fervor to change forever the communities around us. In the week ahead, take some time to read and deeply contemplate the passages in the box on the left, words from the mouth of God that clearly indicate His call for us to evangelize in our daily lives.

The Evangelists

more people whom God desires to save. There is no other reason for His saints to remain in such a dangerous world after their rebirth except that they might act as ambassadors for Him, ushering others to a better country and to an everlasting kingdom. We must take up the