



THE CHICAGO CONNECTION

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

www.chicagochurch.org

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Salt and Light

Abraham. Israel. Peter. Barnabas. Paul. All these great men of faith had a name change at some point along their spiritual journey. Their changed names described either what they were or what they would become.

I'm sure all of us can remember being called a particular name at various points in our lives. Some of the names were good, inspiring and encouraging (especially from our parents, grandparents or best friends); some have no doubt left a bitter and forgettable memory. When Jesus changed Simon's name to Peter, he left an indelible mark on the amazing and endless possibilities of the fisherman's life. He planted a seed that would germinate and blossom, inspiring Peter to live a life of great impact. Jesus gave vision to an unschooled, ordinary man, a vision that would result in him becoming a pillar of the most effective and amazing organization ever established—the church! As His followers, Jesus has also called us names that, if embraced and understood, could not only change our neighborhoods, schools, workplaces and families, but the entire world. And those names are *salt* and *light*. (**Matt 5:13-14**)

Salt

The two most dominant characteristics of salt are that it makes a difference in taste, and that it is a preservative. First, in regard to taste, a little goes a long way. Eating food without salt leaves a lot to be desired, but just a little amount of salt on that food makes a big difference. Similarly, sometimes simply doing the right things, even though they may not seem to be significant, may result in making a huge difference in someone's life. For example, being kind (baking some cookies for your neighbor), or respectful (to your teachers or boss), or helpful (shoveling someone's driveway) or compassionate (helping the poor and needy) can all bring tremendous blessings to those individuals you treat in a kind manner. These are the type of things that don't require huge efforts or much money in

order for you to be the salt of the earth. Think back to how someone's saltiness may have impacted you and eventually led you to Christ. Now think about how your saltiness could impress others and eventually lead them to the Lord.

Secondly, salt's greatest value, especially in the first century, was the fact that it was used as a preservative. It prevented things from rotting, perhaps very similar to a refrigerator today. Before refrigerators and freezers, this was how fish and vegetables were primarily preserved and kept from going bad. Salt was definitely a cherished commodity in the first century. By calling us the salt of the earth, Jesus instills in us the notion that we can keep this world from rotting from the inside out. As His followers,

we can prevent the decay and stench that results from a world which mostly operates outside the teachings of Christ. Jesus calls us to be the moral compass of the world, to be its conscience. And we have a tremendous example

of that in our nation's recent history. As we celebrate Black History Month in February, we are reminded of the time when a preacher from Alabama, Martin Luther King Jr., became the conscience of our nation. Because of his commitment to the principles of Christ's teachings, he became the moral compass for human rights in our nation.

Imagine a world without forgiveness, human rights, compassion and sexual purity. Actually, we don't have to imagine such a world—we see it in many places where these virtues are not regularly practiced. The absence of these principles produces wars, oppression of women and children, slavery, neglect of the poor and diseases from sexual promiscuity, just to name a few. Yet because of Christ and His teachings, we can prevent this world from totally collapsing morally, emotionally and spiritually. Imagine having the ability to save this world simply by living according to the words of Jesus. Imagine being the salt that preserves this earth from rotting.

When Jesus changed Simon's name to Peter, he left an indelible mark on the amazing and endless possibilities of the fisherman's life.

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Member Article: Still Dreaming

The following article was written by Greg Alton, a member of the Joliet Sector in the Greater Westland Region. Greg has been a disciple for 27 years. He and his wife, Pam, have two teenage daughters, Kelli and Kristi, who are both disciples.

As a young man attending Eastern Illinois University, it was almost impossible not to know about the Heritage Chapel Church of Christ. The church at that time was under persecution and, like many of the other students on campus, I joined in the persecution out of ignorance and peer pressure. However, by the grace of God, I became a disciple in October of 1979 and my life was forever changed.

In the fall of 1983, I moved to Chicago and became a member of the Chicago Church of Christ (then the Church of Christ in Oak Park). In those days, the church was primarily comprised of singles who were on fire for God. The fellowship was addicting! Everyone had great dreams and believed that God had amazing plans for each person's life. There was a common goal to reach out to the entire Chicagoland area. We loved the lost and God worked powerfully to help many people come to Him. In April of 1986, I married my loving and beautiful wife, Pam. God has blessed us with two wonderful daughters, Kelli and Kristi, both of whom are disciples.

Although it may seem like my journey has been simple, it hasn't been by any stretch of the imagination. I did nothing the easy way. Most of the time, I battled with pride and independence and rebelled in every way possible. So why did I stay? Why am I still here almost 28 years later? Like Peter, I realized there was nowhere else to go. (**John 6:68**) When I became a disciple, I was converted to my Lord and Master, Jesus Christ. Through all my pride and independence, I still knew that He was in control and that this truly was God's church. I was stubborn to the point that, during these times, I just held on to God's unchanging hand. I knew that God had a plan for me and my family (**Jeremiah 29:11**), and that eventually the Lord's purposes would prevail. (**Proverbs 19:21**)

As time went on, I decided to pull my heart back and retreat. I would continue to attend church services and other church activities, but wondered if I would ever have a fire for the Lord again. Throughout the years, however, God continually brought brothers into my life who challenged my heart and my commitment. A few years ago, I started to listen intently to God's voice again. But I asked myself if God could really use me again after so much wasted time had passed. I decided to listen to that little voice we all have, the Holy Spirit. God used a few of my dearest brothers to correct, encourage and love me. They would help me to dream again.

Opening up my life to others was not going to be easy or enjoyable. I knew it was going to demand humility and perseverance. God's discipline is never pleasant, but it was what I needed. (**Hebrews 12:11**) I decided to let God work again in my heart, to trust where I no longer trusted, to believe with what little faith I had and to surrender myself to Jesus. I knew that I would have to follow the advice I had given to so many others over the years—to open my heart and be vulnerable. What would that entail? It would mean that I would have to walk the talk. I was again reminded of what it would take to have a heart for God. And here's a lesson about the heart which I continued to teach myself, one that involved the following five qualities:

Honesty – be honest with yourself before God (**Jas 1:22-25**)

Eagerness – quickly repent (**2 Corinthians 7:11**)

Attitude – have Jesus' attitude of humility (**Philippians 2:5**)

Righteousness – seek out righteousness (**Matthew 6:33**)

Trust – have faith and trust in God (**Hebrews 11**)

As I repented and came close to the Lord, he renewed a dream which my wife and I had, a dream for Joliet. Amazing things happen when you repent and turn your life back to God! God started to work in my life once again. I started to have a new desire and a hunger for God's word. He has helped me to exchange a life of being complacent and selfish to a life of serving God and those who live in the Joliet area. I am so grateful to God for His patience, His faithfulness and His forgiveness. Only God can take an old, crusty heart and make it new again.

Do You Remember When...

As we celebrate our 25th anniversary, we will occasionally take a look back at some of the defining moments and events in our congregation.

June 1982 — Marty Fuqua leads a group of 30 disciples to begin the Chicago Church. The first service is held in Oak Park with 115 in attendance.

June 1983 — Terry Stanfield from Boston is hired as first campus intern; outreach begins on the campuses of UIC and National College of Chiropractic (NCC) in Lombard; Nora Teague, Veronica Guerra, Todd Assad and Robbin Mitchell are some of the individuals baptized as a result of the efforts at NCC.

September 1983 — Steve Saindon from Minneapolis is hired to take over leadership of the campus work.

August 1985 — Roger and Marcia Lamb move to Chicago from Champaign. Roger becomes co-evangelist with Marty Fuqua.

Reviews and Previews

Mother/Daughter Retreat

March 24-25, 2007

Registration for the Mother/Daughter retreat is now closed. Unfortunately, there will not be a “program-only” option and there will not be an on-site registration option. Scheduled activities are as follows:

SATURDAY, MARCH 24TH

- 10:00 a.m. Registration Begins
- 11:30 a.m. Luncheon
- 1:30 p.m. Breakout Class Sessions
Breakout sessions based on daughter's age
- 2:30 p.m. Open Activities
Spa Room, Craft Room, Game Room, Karaoke Room
- 8:00 p.m. Devotional & Decade Dance

SUNDAY, MARCH 25TH

- 7:00 a.m. Breakfast Buffet
- 10:00 a.m. Worship Service

Teen Ministry

Registration for the **2007 Youth Camps** continues. Full information and registration forms are available on our website, www.chicagochurch.org.

The next **Congregational Teen Devotional** will be held Saturday, March 24th from 4:00-6:00 p.m. at the First Congregational Church of Elmhurst, located at 235 S. Kenilworth Avenue in Elmhurst.

Latin Teaching/Worship Weekend

The weekend of March 17-18 will provide special opportunities for teaching and worship for our Spanish-speaking members. On Saturday at 3:30 p.m., Martin and Carmen Bentley from Orlando, Florida will host separate **men's/women's devotionals** followed by a **parenting devotional**. These events will be held at the India Mission Telugu United Methodist Church (a.k.a. “Willard”), located at 1049 S. Euclid Avenue in Oak Park. Also, a **Congregational Latin Worship** will be held March 18th at 10:00 a.m. at Prosser Career Academy, located at 2148 N. Long Avenue in Chicago.

Greater Westland Region Katherine McGlynn

My young life was turning out just as I had hoped. I felt extremely blessed as a second-year student attending the College of DuPage with a scholarship, and I would continue my third year at Northern Illinois University with a full scholarship. I had a great boyfriend, I was getting straight A's, I was President of Phi Theta Kappa and Vice President of the International Student Society, I had received C.O.D.'s National Distinguished Student Scholar Award and I was planning a study-abroad trip to England. Yet I knew something was still missing, and I knew that this “something” was a relationship with God.

I earnestly pursued a relationship with God by trying to link up with various churches and religious groups at school, but still that void wasn't being filled. Finally, I was approached by different students at C.O.D. in a single day who invited me to a Bible Talk, an invitation I eagerly accepted. From then on, the course of my whole life changed as I finally came to understand what a life devoted to God truly meant. Everything had seemed perfect for me before then, yet it really wasn't since I was missing the most important element of all—a life completely surrendered to God. That is what I wanted most of all.

How grateful I am to God for putting me in the just right place at just the right time. Throughout the last seventeen

years, God has greatly blessed my personal life and has also used me to have an effect on many other people's lives in their pursuit of a relationship with Him. He hand-delivered to me an incredibly loving and spiritual husband, with whom I have celebrated more than 14 years of marriage and three beautiful children. Although I've had my share of life distractions, my desire to serve God hasn't changed. I still yearn to impact others in their relationship with God—the most important being the salvation of my own children. I've gone from trying to be “the perfect disciple” to learning how to humbly accept the grace of God in every aspect of my life—a process that will never end. I desire to be the wise woman who builds her house (**Prov.14:1**), in that the home we are currently building will become a hub for the spiritual community we greatly desire to build as well—a place where those of all ages can feel accepted and loved, a place where spiritual activities, discussions and conversions occur on a regular basis and a place where the grace of God is fully expressed and felt.

Conversion
Corner

Welcome New Baptisms!

Chicago

John Hyon

Metro

Luis Suarez

Greater Westland

George Concialdi

Salt and Light (Cont.)

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Is this possible? How can I, a relatively non-influential person, accomplish the preserving of the whole earth? You may be thinking some of these thoughts: I'm not rich, I don't hold a political office or I'm not even well educated. But the stupendous nature of following Christ is that we can become salt and have a profound impact on the world simply by being His disciples. What if it is true? What if we really can preserve the whole earth? What if we really can keep the earth from rotting? What if we really are the salt of the whole earth?

Light

Two aspects of light are that it illuminates and it acts as a guide. In a world that is dark and depraved, Jesus has graciously afforded us the unbelievable ability to lead it out of its lost state. In a storm, a ship that is lost at sea looks for a lighthouse to lead her home to safety. And that's exactly what the teachings of Christ allow us to do for the people who are lost in the storms of life. You don't have to be a scholar, an orator, a minister, a person of wealth, a certain race or even a picture of health in order to be a guide. All that is needed is a surrendered life to Christ, one who is willing to let the teachings of Jesus be the blueprint for their life.

The teachings of Christ answer the questions of purpose and meaning of life. They help to deal with adultery, abuse, anger, hatred, addictions, jealousy, prejudice and many other seemingly insurmountable issues that plague and devour the hearts and lives of many people. As the light of the world, Jesus empowers us to be a guide for

those whose guilt imprisons them, whose hope escapes them, whose peace eludes them, whose joy is foreign to them and whose emptiness overwhelms them.

Imagine a world where abuses, prejudices, hurts, guilt, hopelessness, insecurities and emptiness are being dealt with, not by drinking or drugging them away, but by disciples of Jesus acting as a lighthouse and guiding those who face these problems to safety. What if it is true? What if we can be the light to a lost world looking for shelter in a terrible storm? What if we are that lighthouse?

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus cast a vision into His followers' lives, helping them to understand that their impact could be felt throughout the entire world. His intent in calling people out of their sin and purposelessness was to inspire them to live lives that would make a difference. Jesus offered a purpose that was beyond them—a purpose that would make an impact which could be felt all over the world. In calling His disciples the *salt of the earth* and the *light of the world*, Jesus ignited a fire in His followers that would inflame into an inferno that could be seen and felt not only in their neighborhoods, towns and villages, but all over the world. Now it's our turn! The Lord has cast the vision, laid the groundwork and given us the power to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world, not only in our neighborhoods, clubs, communities, villages, towns, workplaces and families, but all over the world. Let's live up to the names given to us by our Lord. Let's be the *salt of the earth* and *the light of the world*!

Tony Singh

The Curtain Call: Discovering Our Role in Christ

Join us March 9-10 as the congregation gathers for a **Bible Study Workshop**. As disciples, the greatest call for each of us is the uncommon call to "give up everything" and follow Christ. After that, other specific adventures from God await us. But will we risk going to the one-who-knows on the other side of the curtain?

The famous tale of *The Wizard of Oz* led to a well-meaning but misguided wizard behind the curtain who had all the answers. In reality, this dreamy tale was about seekers who longed to figure out their lives. We can all relate to the story's characters, as they sought answers from this world. The empty place that some of us sense is really a void in *our calling* in Christ. In our journey, the Bible is the curtain whose openings provide the entrance to the ways which God calls us to follow. Join us as we learn from those in the Bible who wrestled to discern God's call. Afterward, you may find the answer to this question: "Given my history, gifts, personal desires and present circumstances, what am I supposed to be doing?"

FRIDAY EVENING, MARCH 9TH

- 7:30 p.m. Worship
 8:00 p.m. **The Missional Call: To Go Anywhere**
 ANDY FLEMING, LOS ANGELES

SATURDAY MORNING, MARCH 10TH

- 9:00 a.m. Singing
 9:30 a.m. **The Primal Call: To Do Anything**
 ANDY FLEMING
 10:30 a.m. **The Crucial Call: To Be Whatever**
 STEVE STATEN

LOCATION

Bryan Middle School
 111 W. Butterfield Road, Elmhurst

There will not be a children's program during this workshop.