



I WANT MY CITY TO KNOW JESUS

Springfield and Hartford Christians meet to share ministry vision for metro region

by Steve Daman

One rainy Thursday in June 2009, a dozen people representing several urban areas met in Hartford, Conn., to share their hearts about urban ministry, particularly as it applies to the Springfield-Hartford area. Together, Springfield, Mass., and Hartford, Conn., less than a half hour apart, make up the second largest metropolitan area in New England. Some folks from these cities have relationships with Emmanuel Gospel Center, are starting to build relationships with each other, and are beginning to wonder how to do there what EGC does in Boston. A team from EGC traveled down to Hartford to offer some input to their discussion.

Donna Calawa, representing Springfield, started the conversation, telling how before she was married, she led a neighborhood Bible study and how that brought about change in her life. "I grew in my love for the women, their families, and the street, and I found myself loving the city of Springfield," she told the group. "I wanted my city to know Jesus. I wanted to be part of what was going on in bringing people to Christ in my city, so I looked for a way."

For Donna, that way included seminary at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and classes in Boston where she met **Doug and Judy Hall**, president and assistant to the president of EGC. In 1984, she served briefly on staff at EGC, "and that confirmed my call to be an urban missionary," she said. Since then, Donna has been working to connect people throughout Springfield, trying to discern how God is moving and how to fan into flame the spiritual vitality that is already there. With EGC's encouragement,



Springfield and Hartford urban ministry leaders gather to share vision for collaborative ministry on June 18, 2009

she and her husband, Don, took on the daunting project of producing a church directory for Springfield as a benchmark for understanding what God is doing and to help other Christians there see the big picture. In 2006, they worked to import a few courses from Gordon-Conwell's Boston campus, CUME, the Center for Urban Ministerial Education, to Springfield for a pilot program training local urban leaders.

Meanwhile, just down the interstate, God was at work in the heart of Annette Wright, giving her his passion for the people of Hartford. Back in 1990, Gordon-Conwell started an extension program in Hartford called UTEC, the Urban Theological Education Center. Annette signed up right away. After a few years, Gordon discontinued that program and Annette began to commute to Boston to continue her education. "Once I got to CUME and saw the network (of ministries in Boston) and started hearing about Emmanuel Gospel Center, and to see the support that the churches were getting, that's when I started to see the possibility of what could happen here."

Annette completed her Master of Divinity degree and went on to earn a

Doctor of Ministry in complex urban settings degree, a CUME program led by Doug and Judy. Later, when the Calawas brought the CUME courses to Springfield, Annette was an adjunct professor. She also has been on the teaching team for CUME's Inner City Ministry class (pioneered by Doug and Judy in 1973 and now co-taught with **Jeff Bass** and **Michele Mitsumori**) in Boston. "We work with the same students for two semesters. You get to know the students and their passion." Students are assigned to develop a ministry project for the year, and trainers walk them through the process. The culmination is a comprehensive paper that serves to put flesh on their personal vision for ministry.

This spring, as Annette read through a number of the final papers, she saw how her Boston students had wrestled with God and how God had touched their hearts to give them understanding and passion. She knew that many of the 40 students would go home and launch ministry projects which would touch many parts of their cities. She thought of her own city, "Lord, imagine all that being in Hartford!" With tears in her eyes she thought of the youth, the children,



Left to right: Rick McKinniss, senior pastor, Wellspring Church, Kensington, Conn.; Russell Jarvis, Urban Alliance, Hartford; Dr. Annette Wright, Phillips Metropolitan CME Church, Hartford; Donna Calawa, Visions for Springfield, Springfield, Mass.; Angela Harris, Phillips Metropolitan CME Church; Brian Corcoran, Citywide Ministry Researcher and Team Leader, Vitality Project, EGC, and Research Associate, Applied Research, EGC

the elderly she knew in her city, and the men and women struggling to bring the love of Christ into the situation but who were without the kind of support her Boston students had received. “My heart was broken,” she said.

During a break at their final class, Annette shared her heart with Doug. Later, Doug said, “I felt, my gosh, why is this all happening only here in Boston? It should be much broader than this! I felt bad that this was not happening in other places. When Annette said that, it really grabbed me. This has got to change!” The idea for this visioning meeting in Hartford was the next step.

Russell Jarvis, also at the table, came to Hartford from North Carolina in 2004 to work with children and youth through the Hartford City Mission. Last year, after being away for more training and ministry in India and Boston, he returned to help develop a new organization called Urban Alliance, designed to be a network of resources, support services, and collaboration to support existing ministries in the Hartford area. Russell

is still in the development stage of that plan. “A vital part of that has been looking at Emmanuel Gospel Center’s model in Boston and understanding what they do and how parts of that may fit here, and also beginning to dialog with folks in the churches here,” Russell said. “Annette and I have spent time talking about ‘What would an ongoing learning community look like in Hartford that was focused on Hartford urban ministry?’”

As the meeting continued, others shared their stories and vision. A clear line emerged between the temptation to “do something” and the better position of looking to the Lord to see what he is already doing, and becoming a part of that. “It is not ‘how are we going to do this,’ because we can’t do it,” Doug said. “But we can provide an entry point for this to begin to happen.” Going to an easel, he began to draw circles, explaining what he meant. We identify what we want to see happen, but, because of the complexity, we can’t clearly see the steps to make it happen. But we can do something over here, even

though it seems small and unrelated. And that something will cause something else to happen here, which in turn can cause something else to happen, and eventually, we find that not only has our original vision come to pass, but in the process, God has created a “huge amount of things, a whole realm of ministry development” at the same time.

The group shared lunch together, and continued their discussion for a few more hours. “The meeting was indeed inspiring,” Annette later reflected. “I am still in awe of God and how he hears our prayers.” She explained that the next step is for Russell, Donna, and her to get together and plan a hexagon session with people they will invite from Springfield, Hartford, New Britain, Waterbury, and surrounding areas. (A hexagon session is a brainstorming method to help a group of people who are grappling with an issue that is relevant to all of them be able to see their issue in a clearer way. The process is called hexagoning because one of the primary tools used in the exercise is hexagon-shaped.)

“If we could organize and facilitate this kind of session,” Russell added, “it would, in

my mind, be a jumping off point for highlighting some relevant issues that could produce real ministry projects.” Russell knows the important thing is not what he would like to see happen, but listening, with others, to what God says he wants to do. “I could think of a dozen different things—but essentially it boils down to helping facilitate urban ministry vision for our area and to helping facilitate the unity and collaboration of folks who share a heart for kingdom growth in and around Hartford and other nearby cities.”

“I am so grateful for the folks from the Center who have been enthusiastic about sharing their wisdom and encouraging us,” Russell said. “They have really helped to guide our thoughts for stirring up ministry vision in our area. I think some wonderful ideas were shared, some good connections made, and I’m excited about continuing to explore the possibilities for nurturing this and laying out some next steps.”

So what role will EGC take in this new collaborative ministry? “We left it in their hands,” Doug said. “We are not going to do anything. They are.” Photos: Steve Daman



Dr. Doug Hall, president of EGC, explains ministry “entry points”

Whew! It's only been two months, but there is already a lot to report for this installment of Grace Notes.

Sally Steele, an Intercultural Ministries Associate who has been working with us since early last summer, closed her time at EGC in May 2009. Sally started out as an intern for Intercultural Ministries, then eventually stepped into a staff role as an associate, and has been a valuable contributor to other ministries, including the Youth Violence Systems Project.

Gregg Detwiler, director of Intercultural Ministries, says, "Sally has been a gift of God to our EGC family and specifically to Intercultural Ministries. She has a 'can do' spirit that demonstrates a servant's heart and a wide range of skills and competency. We pray for God's blessing in this next season of her life and believe that the sky is the limit for how God will use her in the coming days."

While we are sad to see her go, we are sending her off with showers of blessing for the next phase of her life—parenthood! Sally and her husband Justin (who is on EGC's Board of Directors), welcomed



their first baby, Siena Mae Steele, on May 23. Congrats to the new parents!



Speaking of new additions, we're delighted to announce two new staff members, starting with **Rema Cheng**, who joined the Applied Evaluation Systems (AES) team in June as a senior associate. Rema, who moved across the country from sunny California to Cambridge with her husband Josh in August 2008 right after they were married, will be responsible for managing client relationships, assisting in managing projects and subcontractors, and supporting **Khary Bridgewater**, director of AES. Rema previously worked with youth in inner-city Oakland, and is especially excited to build on her understanding of how to serve youth through the Youth Violence Systems Project. "I hope to contribute to its purpose and grow in my knowledge of youth," she says.

Melissa Kirkwood became Starlight's newest team member in June when she started a new position, Resource Net-

work Coordinator. Melissa will spearhead the development and management of resources, volunteers, and churches in order to equip individuals and churches to engage those who find their home on the streets. She will also be a vital link to supporters and partners and help us understand the social impact of Starlight's efforts in order to better facilitate effective and sustainable models of ministry.

Melissa moved to Boston in 2006 to start graduate school at Boston College, and received her Master's degree in social work last year. Before moving to Boston she lived in South Africa, working and building relationships with street-involved kids and their families. She also helped develop policy and procedures for an AIDS hospice. Prior to her time in South Africa, Melissa worked at International Justice Mission in Washington, D.C.



Melissa says she is "excited about being part of a community that is working to equip and empower the church as the corporate body of Christ and as individual believers—to love, serve, and build personal relationships with the poor as a natural outflowing and response to the rule of Christ, and in such a way that is very natural to how we spend our lives."

Photos: Justin Steele, Rema Cheng, Melissa Kirkwood

The MISSION of the Emmanuel Gospel Center is to understand and help nurture the vitality of urban churches in the context of their broader urban communities, particularly in Boston's low-income and immigrant communities. We believe that churches are God's chosen instruments to bring his life and presence into our communities, so all of our work is designed to support what God is doing in and through urban churches. Emmanuel Gospel Center provides resources to help churches operate effectively at the grassroots level through programs that evolve in response to the needs of churches, their communities, and their networks.

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Steve Daman, *Managing Editor*
Grace Lee, *Associate Editor and Designer*
Dana Wade, *Development Director*

617.262.4567
sdaman@egc.org



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EMMANUEL GOSPEL CENTER

2 San Juan Street
PO Box 180245
Boston MA 02118-0994
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PRAY FOR EGC

Wondering how you can pray for EGC? Be sure to check out www.egc.org/prayer.

Thank you, EGC Board of Directors!

EGC is blessed to have an amazing Board of Directors with exceptional commitment, energy, and enthusiasm. **Jeff Bass**, executive director, says, "I recognize that an active, hard working, and enjoyable Board is a rare thing, and I am grateful to the Lord for EGC's Board, which is all of those things. Thank you for providing real leadership to our work, and for being so generous with your time, support, and resources."

In FY 2010, we welcome Justin Steele and Greg Allison to our Board. Justin (husband of Sally Steele, former EGC staff—see page 3) is a candidate for Master in Business Administration and Master in Public Administration degrees at the Harvard Business School and the Kennedy School of Government. He and Sally are members of Heart Change Fellowship

in Roxbury, and he is a volunteer teacher at Citizens Schools in Boston. Greg Allison is Vice President and Investment Director in the Equity Product Management Group of Wellington Management Company, LLP, in Boston. Greg and his wife, Leslie, are members of Trinitarian Congregational Church in Wayland.

We are sad to see Glenn Sacra, a longtime friend of EGC, also a member of Trinitarian Congregational Church in Wayland, leave the Board after six years of faithful service. Glenn was a key leader in the Center's capital campaign a few years ago, and in the development of our fun-filled and successful annual dinners. Thank you for your presence and support, Glenn! We will miss you at Board meetings (but look forward to working with you in other ways).



Photos: Jeff Bass

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