

Hartford City Mission Fall Newsletter, 2018



LIVING BOLDLY IN GOD'S STORY

Reflections on this year's theme by Sam Hayashida—HCM Staffer

One of my favorite pastimes as a high schooler was to have 'theology skirmishes' with my friends. We'd get together at one of our homes, pour ourselves large cups of coffee, and would argue late into the night about Young earth versus Old earth, or infant baptism, or the possibility of losing one's salvation.

At first, those "discussions" were mostly contests of "who can quote the most Bible verses that sound like they're endorsing my opinion?" But in time we learned the importance of reading scripture in context. We began to see that there is a "bigger picture" that unfolds inside the Bible — and no single verse makes complete sense unless read in light of that bigger picture. It changed the way we read the Bible. And it made the Bible come alive.

The theme we chose this year at HCM is "Living Boldly in God's Story." And I think the message of this theme is similar to the lesson I learned in high school: there is a bigger picture — not just in the Bible, but in life... in this world that we eat, sleep, work, and take showers in. And you cannot truly understand the meaning or purpose of your life unless you view it in light of that bigger picture.

Everything changes when you realize that Jesus did not just exist in some distant land, in some distant time "long ago" ... but that he walked this same earth that we walk today. He breathed the same mixture of Oxygen and Nitrogen that fills our lungs today. And some fish that someone ate in a restaurant on the shore of the Sea of Galilee earlier this week... is a direct descendant of some fish that Jesus ate years ago(think about it). Moses standing up to Pharaoh, the destruction of Jericho through shouts, the salvation of the Jews through Esther... these things actually happened. And they're a part of *our history and heritage*.

When you grasp this not just in your head but deep down in your bones — that YOU are living in the same story that Abraham, Moses, Ruth, Esther, Peter, Paul, and Mary Magdalene were a part of — you can't help but feel braver. And want to live more boldly. Because if the same God who parted the Red Sea and sustained millions of people in the desert for 40 years is for *you*, then what can stop you?

That's why we chose this theme of "Living boldly in God's story." We want our COGs (Children of God) to view their lives in

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Please join us in thanking our 2018 Gold and Silver Sponsors



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HCM Friends, Nuchette Black-Burke,
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HCM Friends, Tim and Teri Dalhstrom with
Pastors Carlos and Eliezer Perez



HCM Parents, Eula James
and Elaine Brown-Thorpe

Going Out, Reaching In, and Inviting People

"HCM is a body of believers that have come together to serve this community in any way possible through our faith in Jesus Christ. We are going out, and reaching in, and inviting people to share the love of Christ."

- HCM Co-Founder, Selma Chandler

In 1996, HCM co-founder Vicki Huffman felt called to reach out beyond her community of Wethersfield into Hartford and to build relationships with children there. Joined by friends from First Church of Wethersfield, the L.I.F.E (Life In Faith Explosion) ministry was born in the Charter Oak Housing Development (now the site of Hartford's Walmart). During 1997-1998, the development was knocked down, sending Vicki and First Church back to the drawing board for ideas. After visiting New York's Metro Ministry (now Metro World Child), the largest urban children's ministry at the time, and being inspired by the idea of Mobile Ministry, an announcement was placed in the church's newsletter looking for volunteers for a new "Sidewalk Sunday School" program.

Postcards were handed out at local churches in efforts to get others in the Hartford area involved, including Crossroads Community Cathedral, where HCM's co-founder, Selma Chandler, recognized the term from visiting Metro Ministry herself, and was excited to get involved. Our 3rd co-founder, Rex Fowler, had also visited the ministry in NY, and a mutual friend of his and Vicki's suggested this might be something he might want to get involved in after seeing First Church's newsletter. Having recently started going to Valley Community Baptist Church, Rex shared the opportunity with the youth leaders there and they caught the vision together. Looking back, he can see how, "the youth and leaders from Valley faithfully coming each week brought the numbers needed to have a successful outreach to the growing crowd".

First Church purchased a box truck and rehabbed it to fit the Sidewalk Sunday School's needs, including an entire side that dropped down to create a stage. Prayers were answered when a connection was made to an employee of Chappelle Gardens, a housing complex in Hartford's North End



neighborhood. His invitation for the group to come to the apartment complex to share the mobile ministry, opened doors for the Noah Sidewalk Sunday School to drive in for its first day of ministry on Saturday, October 31, 1998.

Many churches and individuals came together that day, including volunteers from Crossroads, First Church, and Valley. They joined in the set-up, laid out tarps for the kids to sit on and knocked on doors with invitations. Remembering the excitement, Selma shared, "Kids from everywhere came to hear the message, play games, have wonderful snacks and then, all of the sudden, these kids were talking about Jesus."

When attendance at Noah reached about 50 kids, a second site was introduced in the neighborhood. A middle and high school ministry was added in 2001, followed by a weekly after school tutoring program in one neighborhood elementary school, with a second added in 2004. Relationships were being built and strengthened, and as the years passed some of the volunteers began to talk about ways to be more intentional than once a week. Apartments were rented right there in Chappelle Gardens and more on other nearby streets. Rex shared, "more people were moving into the neighborhood and realizing that one day a week was not going to be enough to continue to build the relationships." The ministry led exclusively by suburban-based volunteers in 1998, transitioned over time to a ministry led by North End residents, some who were new to the neighborhood, and some who'd lived there all their lives. Their commitment to transitioning to a more relationship-oriented model, along with continued support from the churches, donors and volunteers, was the foundation of Hartford City Mission (HCM) as we know it as today.



Selma, Rex and Vicki at HCM's 20th Anniversary Gala

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End of the Year Appeal Letter Enclosed!

From the bottom of our hearts, thank you for considering an end of the year donation to HCM. Your donation will benefit the L.I.T. program through:

- *Faith-Based Leadership and Character Development*
- *Academic Support*
- *Work Experience*
- *Reward Trips*

Living Boldly in God's Story - Continued from pg 1

context. To realize that they're living inside of a bigger picture, and that this makes all the difference in the world. Because it means that when things seem dark and hopeless, they can look up and take heart... remembering that men and women like David, Daniel, and Esther have gone before them. Men and women who shut the mouths of lions, slayed giants, and won the hearts of kings, empowered by their faith in God.

That's the story we're a part of. It's the most amazing story that ever was. So let's play our part and join the ranks of David, Daniel, Esther, and everyone who ever lived by Faith. Let's fix our eyes on Jesus, and run the race set before us... *living boldly in God's story.*



Going Out, Reaching In and Inviting People - Continued from pg 2

Twenty years later, the three founders have acknowledged that never in their wildest dreams had they imagined HCM growing to where it is today, with two daily Noah after-school sites (grades 1-5), a daily middle school site (grades 6-8), a weekly Young Life group (grades 9-12), and a six week summer camp (for grades 1-7) with summer employment opportunities for our Young Lifers. "Our desire through the L.I.F.E program, through NSSS, and then through HCM was to bring the love and fragrance of Christ as we dwelled in the neighborhood, as we ministered to the children's families and I see that happening now as HCM has spread its wings", Vicki shared.

Today, Executive Director Dave Ambrose sees a parallel to the story of the "loaves and fishes" in the book of John chapter 6 and the history of HCM. Jesus' disciples were faced with the problem of feeding a crowd and having little resources on hand. A child in the crowd shared the little bit of lunch that he had with him, and Jesus multiplied the offering. Here in Hartford, in 1998, Rex, Selma and Vicki saw another need, brought their offerings, the talents and resources they had on hand, and Jesus multiplied the offering through them.

Thank you to all who have brought your "loaves and fishes" to the table over the years. Your love for the children along with your time and monetary contributions are so appreciated and as a Staff and Board, we pray that our Lord would continue to multiply his work here, in our beloved neighborhood and amongst the churches and HCM families that we do life with daily.

You are part of the HCM family!

You can support the work to empower transformational leaders and inspire vibrant community by:

- ◆ Donating to the Christmas Store (early Dec.)
- ◆ Praying regularly for our students, parents, volunteers, and staff.
- ◆ Volunteering weekly to support one of the After School Sites or Young Life.
- ◆ Making a donation - HCM is a 501c3 non-profit.

*For more information visit our website or contact
Executive Director, Dave Ambrose at
davea@hartfordcitymission.org*



www.hartfordcitymission.org

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