

“He has showed you, oh mortal, what is good / and what does the Lord require of you / but to do justice, to love kindness, / and to walk humbly with your God.” - Micah 6:8

Dear Friends and Family,

By now, most of the world has heard of Ferguson, MO, an inner-ring suburb about 3 miles away from our church building. The events in Ferguson have brought international attention to the racial and economic lines that still divide most of American society. These are lines that we are very familiar with. St. Louis is one of the most racially segregated cities in the country, and many of the forms of past discrimination continue to linger in our city. Out of this tragedy, we are reminded that the Christ's ministry of reconciliation must continue and we are called to active participation in reconciling all things to Christ.

On August 31, over 500 individuals, both black and white, and representing more than 15 congregations of the churches of Christ came to Ferguson for a service of lamentation. During this time, we read from the psalms, sang, prayed, and heard personal experiences from church elders about growing in a segregated society. The theme was one of mourning and crying out for God's mercy and healing.

As part of the process, area ministers have agreed to meet together (after years of separate meetings) and begin discussions of how to bridge the racial divide among churches. This service was the first step in a journey towards reconciliation among St. Louis churches. At North City, we rejoice at being a part of this journey toward reconciliation and believe it will help to heal to the divisions in the body of Christ.

Prophets New and Old

For the past several months, the adult Bible class has been focusing on the call of the prophet. We watched a series of talks by Michelle Alexander, a civil rights attorney who wrote a book called *The New Jim Crow*. Ms. Alexander argues (persuasively) that the US practice of mass incarceration and the War on Drugs has punished disproportionately people of color. The “criminalization” of black and Latino young men works essentially the same as the old Jim Crow; felons, often convicted for nonviolent drug crimes, are stripped of their civil rights, including the right to votes. Men with criminal records are barred from all jobs except the worst menial jobs, leaving many unemployed, yet because of their record they are unable to receive food stamps or housing subsidies. The result? An endless cycle of poverty and crime which keeps minorities locked up and locked out of society. Ms. Alexander's talk, given at last years Christian Community Development Conference, was a real wake-up call for us at North City. Many of us know or are related to young men serving time, yet we did not realize how pervasive the problem was. As a result of our class, we had many productive conversations about race, society, and the witness of the church.

Michelle Alexander's work is prophetic in that she calls society to see how the “least of these” are being treated. She carries on the tradition of Amos, Micah, Isaiah, and the other biblical prophets, whom we are studying now. While Israel was certainly guilty of idolatry, we're also seeing that again and again (especially in Amos), the people are called out for their treatment of the defenseless. No name for God is so often repeated in the Old Testament as this: “Yahweh, the God of the poor, the immigrants, the widows, and the kids in foster care.” Pray for us as we seek to embody the insight and courage of all of God's prophets.



Summer Jobs and Leadership Responsibility

When we started our disciple leadership class, one of the main emphases was that we are to be led by the Holy Spirit and the teachings of Jesus. We praise the Lord that as a result of working hard and sacrificing much, several of our youth have summer jobs. We have two that are working with the boy scout camp, one that is working with Gateway Greening and two at North City with the summer program. This will help our youth to have a better understanding of what it takes to prepare for the future. They are excited about earning money to help with their back to school necessities. We are thankful to all who have sacrificed in so many ways so that our youth can experience the positive aspects of life. We praise our God for all resources.

3 Weeks of Summer Programming

After finishing a great semester of tutoring (with 75% of our 30 students having near perfect attendance), we began our three-week summer program in June. Madison Church of Christ from Nashville, TN helped us kick off the summer with great classes, including a gardening project in which the kids built, painted, and planted new garden boxes for our courtyard. Three area congregations, LeClaire Christian Church, Ferguson Heights Church of Christ, and Maryland Heights Church of Christ, partnered together for our second week. Many of the volunteers from these churches work year round with the children. We finished the program with Oakcrest Church of Christ from Oklahoma. In addition to treating 20 staff and students to dinner and a Cardinals game, they played basketball nightly with our teens and neighborhood young adults. This summer we added reading class into the schedule. In the classes, the students read one-on-one with a tutor, and at the end of each day, they took home a book for their personal library. We received several hundred books from Bellevue Church of Christ in Nashville in May, and around 450 books went home with our students. At the end of July, we hosted our annual Back-to-School store, and 70 children filled new backpacks with the supplies (donated by Harding University Spring break team, Lafayette Church of Christ, and Oakcrest Church of Christ) they needed to have a successful school year.



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During our August break, we have been gearing up for our fall semester. The tutoring program will continue to meet on Thursday nights for grades K-12 with newly developed curriculum for our math and Bible classes. We are beginning a new mentoring program scheduled to meet on Tuesday nights. Mentors will be matched with one student, and will build their relationship through Bible study, games, and dinner. Also, each month, an outing will be planned to further the mentoring relationship. We are excited that our programs are growing!



May God's blessing be with you,

The Family of God at North City Church of Christ

P.S. Check our a slideshow of our summer events which is currently posted on our website at www.northcitychurch.org