

GOING URBAN: AN OVERVIEW OF URBAN MINISTRY FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

By Ben Edwards

Introduction

As the world grows increasingly urban, the church must increase its focus on urban ministry. For the first time in history, the majority of the world now lives in urban areas, which means urban ministry provides the greatest opportunity to reach the largest number of people.¹ America is ahead of the rest of the world in the urbanization process, with an estimated 82.3% of the population living in urban areas in 2010, rising to 90.4% by 2050.² As important as urban ministry is for foreign missions, it is even more important for home missions. Yet many conservative evangelicals and fundamentalists are either unaware of needs for urban ministry, ill-equipped to meet this challenge, or uncertain of how to approach the issue.

How can Christians recognize this global trend of urbanization and adjust missions strategies and efforts to minister in a world increasingly dominated by cities, both at home and abroad? This workshop will include reasons for doing urban ministry, principles for forming a biblical urban ministry strategy, pitfalls in urban ministry, a look at how ICBC is implementing an urban ministry strategy in Detroit, and ways in which you can be involved in urban ministry.

Worldwide Urbanization

Between 1920 and 2007, the world's urban population increased from about 270 million to 3.3 billion, with 1.5 billion urban dwellers added to Asia, 750 million to the more developed regions, just under 450 million to Latin America and the Caribbean, and just over 350 million to Africa. These changes foreshadow those to come. Between 2007 and 2050, the urban population is expected to increase as much as it did since 1920, that is, 3.1 billion additional urban dwellers are expected by 2050, including 1.8 billion in Asia and 0.9 billion in Africa.³

In 2025, an estimated 57.2% of the population will be in urban areas, rising to 69.6% in 2050. Megacities, urban agglomerations with at least ten million inhabitants, are often what people think of when they think of cities. In 2005, there were 19 megacities around the world. The number of these massive urban areas is expected to increase to 27 by 2025 but will only compose 10% of the world's urban population.

Large cities, those with populations ranging from five million to just under ten million, will grow from 30 to 48 by 2025, accounting for 7% of the urban population.

There were 361 cities with more than one million inhabitants but fewer than five million in 2005. This number is expected to increase to 524 by 2025 and include 23% of the population.

The next size of cities, those with 500,000 to one million inhabitants, included 446 cities in 2005. That number will grow to 551 by 2025, with an 8% share of the population.

¹ United Nations Population Fund, "Linking Population, Poverty, and Development: Urbanization, a Majority in Cities," 2007, <http://www.unfpa.org/pds/urbanization.html> (accessed August 12, 2009).

² United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs/Population Division, *2007 Revision of the World Urbanization Project*, p. 31. http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/wup2007/2007WUP_Highlights_web.pdf (accessed August 12, 2009), p. 31

³ United Nations Population Division "An Overview of Urbanization, Internal Migration, Population Distribution and Development in the World," January 2008, http://urban.sbts.edu/files/overview-of-urbanization-internal-migration-population-distribution-and-development-in-the-world_un.pdf (accessed January 2, 2010), p. 3.

Small urban centers, those with less than half a million inhabitants, are expected to absorb nearly half of the expected increase in the urban population between 2005 and 2025 and include 51% of the urban population.⁴

American Urbanization

The United States of America is the fourth largest nation in the world with an estimated population of 307,212,123.⁵ The U.S. has been following the global trend, with the populations of cities continuing to increase over the last several years.

Overall Urban Growth

In 1950, 64.2% of the population lived in urban areas, while in 2000 the urban population had grown to 79.1%.⁶ There will be an estimated 82.3% of the population living in urban areas in 2010, and by 2050 the urban population in the U.S. will have reached 90.4%.⁷ In 2007, approximately 249,000,000 lived in cities, while only 57,000,000 lived in rural areas.⁸ In 2008, the twenty-five largest cities claimed over a tenth of the U.S. population,⁹ and over a quarter of the population lived in the 273 cities with more than 100,000 people.¹⁰ The disparity between those in cities and those in rural areas will continue to grow in the coming years. While the population of the United States is expected to grow by about 0.97% between 2005 and 2010,¹¹ the urban population is expected to grow at a rate of 1.34%.¹²

Specific City Population Changes

According to a recent report from the U.S. Census Bureau, the three fastest growing cities in the U.S. from July 1, 2007–July 1, 2008 were 1) New Orleans, LA: total population of 311,853, and 8.2% gain 2) Round Rock, TX: total population of 104,446 and 8.2% gain, and 3) Cary, NC: total population of 129,545 and 6.9%

⁴Ibid., pp. 13-14.

⁵Central Intelligence Agency, *The World Factbook* online, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/us.html> (accessed August 12, 2009).

⁶United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs/Population Division, *2007 Revision of the World Urbanization Project*, p. 31. http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/wup2007/2007WUP_Highlights_web.pdf (accessed August 12, 2009). "Urban areas are defined as densely settled territory that meets minimum population density requirements and encompasses a population of at least 2,500 inhabitants." p. 31

⁷Ibid., pp. 80-81.

⁸Ibid., p. 72.

⁹U. S. Census Bureau, Population Division, "Table 3: Population Estimates for the Largest U.S. Cities based on July 1, 2008 Population Estimates: April 1, 2000 to July 1, 2008," released July 1, 2009, <http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/population/013960.html> (accessed on August 12, 2009).

¹⁰U. S. Census Bureau, Population Division, "Table 1: Annual Estimates of the Resident Population for Incorporated Places Over 100,000, Ranked by July 1, 2008 Population: April 1, 2000 to July 1, 2008," released July 1, 2009, <http://www.census.gov/popest/cities/tables/SUB-EST2008-01.xls> (accessed on August 12, 2009).

¹¹UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs/Population Division, *2007 Revision of the World Urbanization Project*, p. 141.

¹²Ibid. p. 121.

gain.¹³

The three cities with the greatest numerical growth during the same period were 1) New York City, NY: 53,500 new residents, a total population of 8,310,212, and 0.6% growth, 2) Phoenix, AZ: 33,184 new residents, a total population of 1,567,924, and 2.1% growth, and 3) Houston, TX: 33,063 new residents, a total population of 2,242,193, and 1.5% growth.¹⁴

Overall, there was an increase of 354,214 within the twenty-five largest cities. Only four of these cities experienced a decrease in population. Detroit, MI, dropped 0.5% to 912,062. Philadelphia's population fell from 1,448,631 to 1,447,395. Baltimore, MD, fell to 636,919, a decline of 0.5%, and Memphis, TN, dropped to 669,651 from 673,187.¹⁵

Ethnic Composition in America

As the United States becomes an increasingly urban country, it is also becoming an increasingly diverse nation. This diversity is most clearly seen within the major cities.

Overall Ethnic Growth

In 1990, the United States population was 80.3% white, 12.1% African American, 2.8% Asian, and 9% Hispanic.¹⁶ In 2000, the population was 75.1% white, 12.3% African American, 3.6% Asian, and 12.5% Hispanic.¹⁷ The estimates for July 2007 are 80% white, 12.9% African American, 4.4% Asian, and 15.1% Hispanic.¹⁸ However, the number of non-Hispanic whites dropped from 69.5% in 2000 to 65.6% in 2008, showing that the increase in the white population between 2000 and 2007 was mainly among Hispanics.¹⁹ From 2000–2008, the United States had an estimated net migration of 8,114,516, composing 36% of the gain in population during that period.²⁰

Ethnic Composition in Specific Cities

¹³Les Christie, "New Orleans: Fastest Growing City in the U.S.," CNN Money Report, July 1, 2009, http://money.cnn.com/2009/07/01/news/economy/fastest_growing_cities/ (accessed August 12, 2009).

¹⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁶U. S. Census Bureau, *Census 1990*. Note: Hispanic origin is considered an ethnicity, not a race, so an individual can be both white and Hispanic, or Asian and Hispanic, etc.

¹⁷U. S. Census Bureau, *Census 2000*.

¹⁸CIA *The World Factbook* online

¹⁹U. S. Census Bureau, Population Division, "Table 3: Annual Estimates of the Resident Population by Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin for the United States: April 1, 2000 to July 1, 2008," released May 14, 2009 <http://www.census.gov/popest/national/asrh/NC-EST2008-srh.html> (accessed on August 12, 2009).

²⁰U. S. Census Bureau, Population Division, "Table 5: Cumulative Estimates of the Components of Resident Population Change by Race and Hispanic Origin for the United States: April 1, 2000 to July 1, 2008," released May 14, 2009, <http://www.census.gov/popest/national/asrh/NC-EST2008-compchg.html> (accessed August 12, 2009.) "Net international migration includes the international migration of both native and foreign-born populations. Specifically, it includes: (a) the net international migration of the foreign born, (b) the net migration between the United States and Puerto Rico, (c) the net migration of natives to and from the United States, and (d) the net movement of the Armed Forces population between the United States and overseas."

The major cities in the United States display a greater diversity than the country as a whole.²¹ According to the 2005–2007 American Community Surveys, New York City, the largest city in the U.S., was estimated to be 44.9% white, 25.7% African American, 11.8% Asian, and 27.4% Hispanic. Los Angeles, the second largest U.S. city, was 48.7% white, 9.9% African American, 10.6% Asian, and 48.5% Hispanic.²² The third largest city, Chicago, was 37.6% white, 35% African American, 4.9% Asian, and 28.1% Hispanic. Phoenix, the fourth largest city, was 76.5% white, 5.5% African American, 2.3% Asian, and 41.5% Hispanic. The fifth largest city, Houston, was 54.7% white, 24.5% African American, 5.4% Asian, and 41.7% Hispanic. As these numbers show, the major U.S. cities display a wider range of ethnicities than the rest of the country.

Religious Breakdown in America

By and large, America is becoming less Christian. The American Religious Identification Survey report from March 2009 shows that 76% of American adults identify as Christian in 2009, down from 86% in 1990, while those who claimed no religion grew from 8.2% in 1990 to 15% in 2009.²³

According to the Religious Congregations Membership Study in 2000, both metro and non-metro areas have about 50% of their population that are religious adherents.²⁴ However, there is only one congregation for every 1,427 in the metro areas while there is one congregation for every 504 people in the non-metro areas.²⁵ Religious groups claimed 61.6% in New York City, with over 3.6 million Catholics, 1.2 million Jewish adherents, and over 175,000 Muslims.²⁶ Los Angeles, with 58.1% claimed by the religious groups, had over 3.8 million Catholics, over 500,000 Jews, and over 100,000 Southern Baptists. Chicago had 57% claimed, with nearly 3.2 million Catholics, 260,000 Jews, and 150,000 members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. In Phoenix, 39.3% of the population was claimed, with over 500,000 Catholics, 160,000 Mormons, and 84,000 Southern Baptists. The Houston metro area claimed 50% of its population as religious adherents, with 760,000 Catholics, over 600,000 Southern Baptist, and over 200,000 United Methodists. This admittedly small sample seems to confirm the commonly held recognition that the Catholic Church has claimed the cities while the Evangelical church has for the most part given them up.²⁷

Reasons for Urban Ministry

²¹ The following statistics are taken from the U. S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, "Demographic and Housing Estimates: 2005-2007," http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/ADPTable?_bm=y&-geo_id=16000US3651000&-qr_name=ACS_2007_3YR_G00_DP3YR5&-ds_name=ACS_2007_3YR_G00_&-_lang=en&-_sse=on (accessed on August 12, 2009).

²² Ibid.

²³ Barry A. Kosmin and Ariela Keysar, *American Religious Identification Survey* (Hartford, CT: Trinity College, 2008), p. 1. http://b27.cc.trincoll.edu/weblogs/AmericanReligionSurvey-ARIS/reports/ARIS_Report_2008.pdf. (accessed August 12, 2009).

²⁴ Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies, *Religious Congregations & Membership in the United States: 2000* (Nashville, TN: Glenmary Research Center, 2000), http://www.glenmary.org/GRC/RCMS_2000/findings.htm. (accessed August 13, 2009). There were 149 religious bodies in the study including Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Mormon, Muslim, Eastern Christian, Eastern Religions, and Unitarian Universalists.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid., <http://ext.nazarene.org/rcms/214.html> (accessed August 13, 2009).

²⁷ E.g., Harvie M Conn, *The American City and the Evangelical Church: A Historical Overview* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994).

One of the main reasons for doing urban ministry is that the world is going urban. As the statistics above indicate, people are moving to the cities. So if Christians are to reach people with the gospel, they must target cities.

Although the world has been going urban for many years, Protestant churches have been going rural and suburban. Evangelical churches have by and large abandoned cities, moving to supposed “greener” pastures in the suburbs or focusing on rural areas in missions.

Another reason for urban ministry is the opportunity to reach people groups in America that come from creative access nations. The nations are coming to the cities, meaning urban ministry provides an avenue to reach foreign nations without leaving home.²⁸

The Bible helps us to realize that God cares for the cities. Though this point is often overemphasized, with people reading the city into every part of the Scripture, it should not be overlooked. One of the clearest examples of God’s concern for cities comes from the book of Ninevah. Though Jonah wants to see Ninevah destroyed, God has compassion on the pagan and wicked city, shown in his rebuke of Jonah at the end: “And should not I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also much cattle?”

Because of the transitory nature of the cities and constant influx of new immigrants, cities offer a unique opportunity to reach people with the gospel during a stage in which they are more open. A young man moving from his farm in the village to the city has left his social network and the pressure that it holds to stay true to his family’s religion, making him less resistant to change. “When people make a major move, such as rural to urban or immigration to another country, they tend to be unsettled. They face new values, new ways of doing things, possibly a new language. At the same time they have left behind a large portion of their former support system. Families and friends are separated, possible for the first time in their lives.”²⁹ This creates a wonderful opportunity to minister the gospel to these people facing change.

Those who have moved to the cities from the villages will often maintain some level of contact with the villages. At times they may even move back to the village. This allows for the work done in cities to spread to the surrounding areas, which seemed to be what happened in the early church as well (e.g., Acts 19:9–10; 1 Thess 1:8).³⁰

Key Principles for Forming a Biblical Urban Ministry Strategy

If a city is going to be reached with the gospel, the ministry must be done through the power of the Holy Spirit, which means the strategy that is used must be in line with what the Holy Spirit has given, the Bible. The

²⁸This phenomenon is not only a North American one but occurs throughout the world. The large cities in other countries also experience a higher level of heterogeneity.

²⁹Harvie M. Conn and Manuel Ortiz, *Urban Ministry: The Kingdom, the City, and the People of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), p. 319.

³⁰If cities provide such an excellent opportunity for Christian work, why have evangelicals largely neglected them? Though there are several factors, some of the more prevalent include: 1) the negative image of cities in the minds of many Christians. Cities are identified with the world and are seen as places of violence, crime, and depravity instead of opportunities for gospel ministry. 2) Many Christians are looking for “success” and there are not many “success” stories in cities. They are difficult places to work and minister, so many Christians want to look to more fruitful areas. 3) Cities are more expensive than rural areas. The expense for the missionary and for the church facilities are much greater in cities than in villages, so churches do not get as much “bang for their buck.” 4) Missionaries often feel unhappy in cities. Combined with a sense of loneliness and the difficulty of ministering in cities is the feeling that they are somehow not serving as missionaries when they take subways rather than dug-out canoes.

following principles are important for forming a biblical strategy for urban ministry.

First, gospel proclamation must be central to any urban ministry strategy. The Scriptures are clear that the greatest problem that man faces today is his sin which alienates him from God and places him under God's wrath (e.g., John 3:36; Rom 3:23; 5:12). The task of the Christian is to proclaim the good news that through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ all people can have their sins forgiven and receive Christ's righteousness (e.g. Matt 28:19–20; Rom 1:16–17; 1 Cor 15:1-5). Romans 10:13–17 argues cogently and clearly that this task of bringing people to salvation cannot be accomplished apart from the verbal proclamation of the gospel. Any urban ministry that allows gospel works to replace gospel words is unbiblical. To claim that social transformation and not spiritual transformation is the goal of believers is to fail to follow the example of Jesus Christ, who came to preach (Mark 1:36–38; cf. John 4:34–38).³¹ The role of the Christian is defined by the New Testament, and "if the New Testament shapes our strategy, we will begin with the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Like Paul, we will do everything in our power to win converts and will openly affirm that to be our goal (1 Cor. 9:19–23)."³²

Second, true conversions result in changed lives. The urban minister should not be looking for decisions but for disciples, so his goal is not to convince someone to say a sinner's prayer but to call him to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. When people meet with Jesus Christ, liars begin to speak the truth, those with anger struggles begin to overcome them, thieves begin to work to provide for others, believers begin to minister God's grace to each other through their speech, and bitter people are finally able to forgive (Eph 4:20–32). It is impossible to truly change those bound in sin apart from the work of the Holy Spirit (Jer 13:23), but it is equally impossible for those who have the Spirit to remain bound in sin (Rom 6:1–14). Thus the means of changing the city is by changing the people of the city.

Third, the foundation and target of urban ministry is the local church. The local church is the venue through which God is working today to display His glory through Jesus Christ (Eph 3:10, 20–21). The Apostle Paul was committed to planting churches wherever he went, because "he regarded the church as the unique community of believers in and through whom God was carrying forward his design and purpose in the world."³³ Thus urban ministry must be carried on by local churches, and must be intended to produce new local churches. All those involved in urban ministry must be active members in local churches and either directly or indirectly involved in planting new, indigenous, reproducing churches.³⁴

Fourth, spiritual needs must take precedent over physical needs. From Jesus example (e.g., Mark 1:36–38), the example of the Apostles (e.g., Acts 6:1–4), and the instruction of Paul (e.g., 2 Thess 3:10), it is clear that physical problems and concerns must not have priority over spiritual problems and concerns. To help ensure that deeds of mercy do not force the spiritual needs to the periphery, Carson offers two helpful suggestions: 1) "distinguish between the responsibilities of the church *qua* church and the responsibilities of Christians."³⁵ The leaders of the church must always be consumed first and foremost with their commitment to prayer and the ministry of the Word, but the members of the church can and should be involved with deeds of mercy. 2) "Preach hell," which will remind the urban minister of the need to relieve both eternal and temporal suffering and will create a distinction between a truly gospel-centered ministry and a merely social one.³⁶

³¹David M. Doran and Pearson Johnson, *For the Sake of His Name: Challenging a New Generation for World Missions* (Allen Park, MI: Student Global Impact, 2002), pp. 103–108.

³²Roger S. Greenway and Timothy M. Monsma, *Cities: Missions' New Frontier*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), p. 40.

³³Greenway and Monsma, *Cities: Missions' New Frontier*, p. 45.

³⁴Doran and Johnson, *For the Sake of His Name*, pp. 124–130.

³⁵D. A. Carson, "Editorial," *Themelios* 33.2 (2008): 2.

³⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 2–3.

Fifth, mercy and compassion are an integral part of the Christian life, though they are primarily displayed within the believing community. Since those whose eyes have been opened to behold the glory of Christ are being transformed into His image (2 Cor 3:18), they should begin to display His characteristics. On multiple occasions Jesus exhibited his mercy and compassion (Matt 14:14; 15:32; Luke 7:13) and called his disciples to do the same (Luke 10:25–37). Though this compassion should certainly be extended to unbelievers, the thrust of the New Testament is on meeting needs and showing compassion within the church rather than outside of it (e.g., John 13:35; Acts 2:45; 11:27–30; James 2:14–16; Gal 6:1–2).³⁷

Pitfalls in Urban Ministry

Urban ministry is not without its difficulties, with several pitfalls that must be avoided. Some of those pitfalls will be considered here. One of the greatest struggles of urban ministry can be the feeling of loneliness. Though cities are filled with people, many of them live in practical isolation. Cities lack the community spirit that is more prevalent in smaller villages, leading city residents, missionaries included, to feel alone in the midst of a crowd. It is important for urban ministers to connect with other Christian workers in the city to provide the necessary fellowship while trying to establish a new church. If there are no other Christian workers, then the urban minister should try to establish a ministry team to counter the feelings of loneliness.

When an urban minister begins to realize all of the problems in the city, he can become overwhelmed with the needs he sees. The constant barrage of poverty, injustice, strife, and other sins can almost seem too great. The urban minister may then be tempted to merely address these symptoms of sin by creating different programs to alleviate temporal suffering but neglect the greatest need of the city—reconciliation with God. One must maintain the primacy of the gospel when trying to address the problems of the city.

If someone misunderstands the true nature of sin and God’s plan for cities, he may mistakenly believe that he can create a utopia on earth. When the change he expects does not come, he can become discouraged and no longer desire to minister in the city. Urban ministers must be planted firmly in biblical reality, which means he recognizes the horrible nature of sin and depravity, the coming millennial kingdom when God will supernaturally intervene to bring about a perfect world, and the process of sanctification and transformation until then.

Another danger for urban ministers is an overdependence on their own ingenuity and knowledge of social sciences rather than trust in the Bible and the power of the Spirit. Strategies are formed based on scientific research and human thinking, while the Bible is largely ignored. When the Bible is ignored, the Spirit will not empower the ministry, which means it will be ineffective at bringing about any true transformation. Urban ministers must always remain grounded in the Word, seeking the Spirit’s empowering to serve Christ.

Many have an overly narrow view of urban ministry. For some, that means merely focusing on the mega cities while overlooking the majority of the world who live in smaller cities. For others, that means thinking that they understand the city they are ministering in when they really only know a part of the city or just certain aspects. And for some, that means thinking that urban ministry only entails ministry to the poor, street people, prostitutes, etc. Urban ministry is much broader than many often think, and must incorporate all cities and all the people in the cities.

A subtle but harmful pitfall comes when an urban minister feels a sense of superiority. He may view himself as a “city savior” who has come to rescue the poor and helpless residents who are incapable of doing anything themselves. This attitude creates resentment between the residents and the “outsider” urban minister. This also causes the urban minister to not involve the city residents in ministry, depriving them of their opportunity to grow in Christ through service and their sense of ownership in the ministry while also causing the

³⁷Certainly believers should show mercy and compassion to those outside of the church, but almost all of the passages on mercy ministry in the NT focus on fellow believers.

urban minister to burn out through lack of delegation. Urban ministers must recognize their own sinful depravity that causes them to view others as inferior and must view themselves as partners with the residents of the city in bringing about change.³⁸

A final danger in urban ministry is a romanticized view of the city. Cities have an allure to them that draws people to them. They are places of power and influence. They are centers of business, entertainment, art, and culture, which makes them seem appealing places in which to live and minister. However, cities are also places of poverty, crime, racism, sub-standard education, noise, pollution, and many other problems. In order to live and rear a family in a city, one must recognize that the city is God's place for him and be committed to a difficult but rewarding life of gospel work.

Implementation: The City of Detroit

Detroit, commonly known as the Motor City, is the eleventh largest city in the United States, with an estimated population of 912,062.³⁹ The population has been shrinking for several years, dropping from 1,027,974 in 1990 to 951,270 in 2000.⁴⁰ The decline in population is due in part to "white flight" and middle-class African Americans moving to the suburbs. The city has also been experiencing economic struggles, with an unemployment rate of 11.2% in 2007⁴¹ which has risen to 18.5% as of June, 2009.⁴²

Highlights from the U. S. Census Bureau's 2007 American Community Survey⁴³

According to the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey, 2007, Detroit is predominantly African American, making up 84% of the population, while almost 11% of the people are white, and just over 1% are Asian. The city is 6.5% Hispanic, with Mexicans comprising almost three-fourths of the Latino population.⁴⁴

Just over 5% of Detroit residents were foreign-born, with just over one-third of those moving to the U.S. since 2000. Of those in Detroit over five years of age, 10% speak a language other than English at home, two-thirds of which speak Spanish. Over 5% reported that they speak English less than "very well."

There are 277,000 households in Detroit, with an average size of 2.9 people. The largest type of household, representing 36% of households, is those living alone, followed by a female householder with no husband present at 30% and married couples at 24%.

Of those twenty-five and older, 76% are high school graduates, and 12% had at least a bachelor's degree. There are 247,000 students currently enrolled in school, including around 50,000 in college or graduate school.

The per capita income for Detroit is \$15,284, with the median income for households at \$28,097. Thirty-

³⁸For a helpful look at how this feeling of superiority often hinders us from truly helping others in relation to poverty, see Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert, *When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty without Hurting the Poor...and Yourself* (Chicago: Moody, 2009), esp. pp 64–70.

³⁹ U. S. Census Bureau, Population Division, "Table 3: Population Estimates for the Largest U.S. Cities based on July 1, 2008 Population Estimates: April 1, 2000 to July 1, 2008," released July 1, 2009.

⁴⁰U.S. Census Bureau, *Census 1990 and Census 2000*.

⁴¹U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2007.

⁴²Bureau of Labor Statistics "Metropolitan Area Employment and Unemployment: June 2009," <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/metro.nr0.htm> (accessed August 14, 2009).

⁴³These statistics are for the actual city of Detroit and do not include the greater metro area.

⁴⁴The U. S. Census Bureau considers Hispanic origin an ethnicity and not a race, so a person could be both white and Hispanic, or Asian and Hispanic, etc.

four percent of Detroiters are below the poverty level. Of related children under the age of eighteen, 48% are in poverty. Of all families, 28% have incomes below the poverty line, and 41% of families with a female householder and no husband are in poverty.

The city has a total of 369,000 housing units, 25 percent of which are vacant. Of the 277,000 occupied housing units, 55% are occupied by the owners, with renters occupying the other 45%. For mortgaged owners, the median monthly housing cost is \$1,185, while for nonmortgaged owners it is \$448, and for renters it is \$704.

ICBC Urban Ministry in Detroit

Currently, the urban ministry effort of ICBC consists of four main areas: Midtown/Wayne State University ministry, the Freedom House ministry, Grace Baptist Church in Hamtramck, and an Urban Ministry Internship.

Midtown/Wayne State University Ministry

The Midtown/Wayne State University ministry is the most substantial aspect of ICBC's urban ministry. The church first began ministry at Wayne State University in 2003 by beginning to form redemptive relationships with international students.⁴⁵ On February 5, 2005, Campus Bible Fellowship (CBF), ICBC's campus ministry, was given charter recognition as an official student organization at Wayne State University. CBF is led by the campus ministry leadership team of ICBC with the vision to reach students, staff, and faculty with the gospel of Jesus Christ, assimilate them into our local church, sustain them toward active membership, and equip them to reach the nations. We employ a three-stage strategy to reach this goal: communicating with the community, connecting through relationships, and committing toward Bible studies.

Communicating with the Community

CBF connects with the community through several avenues. Since 2007, SEMCM has leased a campus house, the CrossRoads to the Nations House (Nations House), within the boundaries of Wayne State's urban campus to help establish a presence in the area. I moved to Midtown in October of 2008 to provide further means of contact within the neighborhood. CBF advertises to the Wayne State community through its website, flyers on community boards, *The South End*, which is the official student newspaper of Wayne State University, the Chinese Student Organization's website, Facebook, and word of mouth. Each Wednesday, CBF hosts a literature table in the lobby of the student center for four hours to provide free literature on key issues related to the Scripture and the gospel and gain contact information of those interested in order to allow for follow-up.

At the beginning of each year, CBF organizes a furniture give-away for Wayne State students and scholars. Throughout the year, the church collects and stores donated furniture to be distributed in the fall. Most of the students who participate are international students who have just recently come to Detroit and have no furnishings for their apartments. We bring vans to Wayne State to pick up the students and bring them to the church, which for many is the first time they have been to a church. We give them a tour of the church, provide them with information about the campus ministry and the gospel, and then allow them to pick out some furniture. We then load the furniture into trucks and assist the students in moving it into their apartments. Several of the students and scholars who participate in the furniture give-away become involved in our English Language Partner program.⁴⁶

⁴⁵Redemptive relationships refers to relationships with unbelievers that are intended to provide opportunities for gospel witness in the hope that the person will trust in Jesus Christ for salvation.

⁴⁶The English Language Partner program will be discussed under the heading "Connecting through Relationships."

Each Friday at the Nations House, ladies from the church host a Ladies' Lunch and Learn. The program is primarily intended for lady students at Wayne State and the wives of students, but those from the community are not turned away. The ladies from the church prepare a meal and serve it at the Nations House. After the meal, they explain to those in attendance how to prepare the dishes and provide recipes for them to try it. Since most of those who come are international students who are unfamiliar with American ingredients and cooking, the Lunch and Learn program helps them learn how to prepare different dishes with the new ingredients they are finding. Following lunch, there are two classes: a Bible Study that covers foundational truths concerning the gospel, and an English Class that utilizes a Bible story book to teach conversational English.

Connecting Through Relationships

Once contacts have been established, CBF seeks to develop these relationships in order to bring people towards Jesus Christ. One of the primary ways for relationships to grow is through our English Language Partner (ELP) program. This program connects international students with members of ICBC to provide opportunities to improve conversational English and study the Bible. Partners can determine the frequency of their meetings based on their own schedule, but normally they meet once a week for an hour. The members of ICBC can meet with the students on Wayne State campus or in the midtown area, but they are also encouraged to invite them into their homes to interact with their families. The members do not force the students to study the Bible, but they ask if the student is interested and begin a Bible study if the student agrees.⁴⁷

Committing Toward Bible Studies

Relationships are not an end in themselves, so the goal in all the relationships that are established, whether with unbelievers or believers, is to get them into God's Word. CBF has two primary group Bible studies, both of which are intended for evangelism and discipleship. On Mondays during lunch there is a Bible study in the student center of Wayne State University open to students, faculty, and staff. The format on Mondays is a directed discussion group covering a wide range of biblical topics. Wednesday evenings there is a worship service at the Nations House for the Wayne State and Midtown community. The format on Wednesdays is closer to a typical church service, with singing, Bible study, and prayer, because this service is partially designed as an organic church planting effort.

Besides the two main group studies, there are anywhere from eight to fifteen one-on-one or small group Bible studies that are being conducted within CBF's ministry.⁴⁸ The church also brings a van to campus on Sundays to provide a ride to the church, which is around eleven miles from campus.

Freedom House Ministry

The Freedom House, located in Southwest Detroit, provides temporary shelter and help for refugees seeking legal asylum in the United States and Canada. ICBC does not have any formal relationship with the Freedom House, but members of the church are involved in ministering to residents of the house. Some of the residents are included in the English Language Partner program. A van is provided each Sunday for those who are interested in attending the church and every other Saturday evening for those interested in attending an

⁴⁷Because most of these students have little to no knowledge of God or the Bible, the ELPs are encouraged to study through Genesis 1–3, then Romans 1–4, and John 1–6 to provide a thorough background and understanding of the story and nature of redemption.

⁴⁸The variance comes from the transitory nature of student ministry, since a student may be available one semester but not the next or may move or transfer to a different school.

indoor soccer game at the church.

Grace Baptist Church in Hamtramck

Grace Baptist Church in Hamtramck, MI, is a church plant from ICBC Baptist Church. Hamtramck, the most densely populated city in Michigan,⁴⁹ is 61% white, 15% African American, and 10% Asian.⁵⁰ Some of the major ancestry groups are Polish (22%), Yugoslav (10%), and Arab (9%). The church planting team for Grace Baptist is composed of members of ICBC, which has also provided financial support and encouraged other members to join the church planting effort. Grace Baptist Church has been meeting on Sunday evenings for over a year and is intending on having its charter Sunday in the spring of 2010. Members of ICBC will help in canvassing the area to advertise the church's beginning.

Urban Ministry Internship

The Urban Ministry Internship, introduced this past summer, is intended to provide university and seminary students who are interested in urban and multi-ethnic ministry an opportunity to interact with a variety of ministries in the Detroit urban area during the summer. The interns gain experience in urban campus ministry, upper socioeconomic outreach, lower socioeconomic outreach, multi-ethnic ministry, and urban church ministry. The program also includes required reading, interviews, and reports in relation to urban ministry.

Plans for Future Ministry

The Midtown/Wayne State University ministry has plans to be expanded through the addition of new avenues of ministry at the CrossRoads to the Nations House, including free legal counsel on a monthly basis, resume workshops and job interview training classes for the community, self-defense classes for ladies, a program similar to Reformer's Unanimous, and family and marital counseling times.

ICBC is also working to begin a children's outreach program in Mexican Town. Once every other week, a team from the church will rent a local club's facilities to host an evangelistic program for children in the community. The program would be in Spanish, targeting the large portion of Spanish speakers in the area. In addition, another team could provide an ESL class to reach the adults in the community. If these programs gain a measure of numerical success, the possibility of a Spanish speaking church plant could then be considered.

Your Role in Urban Ministry

If urban ministry is a necessary and vital party of missions for the 21st century, how should you be involved? For some, your involvement will mean seeking to plant churches in urban contexts, either at home or abroad. For others, your involvement will mean choosing to live in a city, even some of the worst neighborhoods, to help a church plant or existing church and to minister to that neighborhood. For everyone, it should mean being willing to serve city churches with your time and resources and praying for cities and those living and ministering in them that the gospel would have free course and run.

⁴⁹Chair of the Public Transit Subcommittee Public "Transportation in Michigan: An Economic Development Tool Whose Time Has Come," February, 2009, p. 3 <http://house.michigan.gov/SessionDocs/2009-2010/Testimony/Committee13-2-17-2009-3.pdf> (accessed August 14, 2009).

⁵⁰U. S. Census Bureau, *Census 2000*.