



Helping people discover the God who is far more than they imagine.

DECEMBER, 2011

I know it's been awhile since you've heard from us.

Please accept our apologies for tarrying in letting you know what and how imagine/Northampton has been doing. I don't know about you, but before we realize it, days turn into weeks turn months. I'm not excusing our laxity just explaining what seems to have happened.

Since I wrote before the summer good things have happened. Here are the highlights:

1. We celebrated the baptism of Jon Hill, imagine's first.
2. We had the first baby born into our little community: Elijah Daniel Oldham.
3. Our band, 1FlightUP, (<http://www.reverbnation.com/1flightup>) played its first gigs out in the community.
4. Under the able leadership of poet, Brad Davis, we held our first Place and Possibility Workshop to artists in our area.
5. We offered our second Inward/*OUTWARD* Missional Formation Workshop to folks in our church this fall. Plans are to begin our first Missional Small Group in January.
6. We've seen an increase in young women from Smith College attending our Sunday morning gathering, including Crystal Fryer, the Intervarsity Christian Fellowship Staff Worker.
7. We've held 3 all-church Visionation meetings this fall to begin strategizing how to move forward in our mission. We are moving into Chapter Two of our story. Chapter One was planting imagine/Northampton. It's planted.
8. We are serving meals for our third year at the Northampton Interfaith Shelter.
9. Imagineers participated in and served behind the scenes at the 5K Hot Chocolate Run in Northampton to raise money for Safe Passage, <http://www.safepassage.org/>.
10. Tricia led a women's retreat at the Center For Renewal for a group of Navigators from Boston, and Kit led a men's retreat for Southwick Community Church in May.

We continue to meet on Sunday mornings for a simple worship at our space on Main Street. While we are still small, we *are* growing a bit. In fact, we need to look for another space in order to be able to sing and accommodate more folks. We don't have a worship team *per se* (still waiting for a gifted worship leader), but the trio plays soft, contemplative music during our "Set-Aside" and "Lift-Up" prayer segment of the gathering. Jim LaMontagne has done the lion's share of the teaching, but Tricia and I will be doing more of that to give him a break, and add variety to the Sunday morning mix.

What We Need:

1. Increased income - \$6000/month.
2. A transition space for worship, and to accommodate our growing; the finances to pay for it.
3. Time to develop young leaders in our midst to carry forth imagine's vision.
4. A Worship Team to form from the musicians and singers here: creative, inspiring and sensitive to the Spirit in our midst.

What You Can Pray For:

1. God would open the opportunities and make us able to tell CHAPTER TWO of imagine's story and mission. He would open the way to the people key to helping us live it.
2. The vision we've been given for acquiring a "third place" (more about that early next year) in Northampton to better connect and build relationships with its people - finances to do it.
3. We need to grow as a church. May God add to our numbers, especially non-believers. May our love deepen for the people in this small, unique city.
4. God would raise up more leadership for our team (a gifted worship leader), and we would take new initiatives to develop the young leaders we have in our church.
5. Spiritual protection for all the people and families, especially the leaders who endure frequent and sometimes disruptive spiritual attack.
6. May our jazz trio, 1FlightUP, become part of the fabric of the musical community in Northampton, and may we build relationships through its work.
7. Individual imagineers and families would increase in their ability to help people find Jesus.
8. Our teaching (Jim, Tricia and Kit) on Sunday would inspire, enable and focus all who on the God who far more than they imagine.
9. The formation of the Creative Arts Team in January. The exact right people God wants on it and they would gel.
10. Strength, health and full provision for all the individuals and families of imagine/Northampton; more work for Kit, Matt Bayne and Jim, if his contract work ends.
11. More opportunities for Tricia to do Spiritual Formation Retreats for young women. We need a facility as well.
12. Oases of rest for the Team in 2012.

What Some of the Imagine Gang Want to Tell You:



TRICIA McDERMOTT:

I have been trying to put together my thoughts on what this process has been for me in planting a church as well as how I am seeing the move of God in people's lives. In trying to write this I have been divided in how to share the many highs and lows of being missional in this town. Not wanting to discourage many who believe in the mission of imagine, or sound whiny or negative, it is often hard personally to describe the reality of mission work. As a Spiritual Director I work with many women in missional work, who are here in the states as well as overseas. I find in their lives as well as my own, it is easy to share all the wonderful ways publicly that Jesus shows up and the continuing possibilities to choose in serving others, but there are those days when we walk face to face into roadblocks, bizarre circumstances, discouragement, spiritual attacks and uncertainty around every corner.

This is part of doing God's work in the world, and Jesus tells us to be wise and to pray. In living life with a missional mindset, I am reminded daily to depending on Him to use the gifts He has given me, but also I am faced with my our own limitations. I am faced with the suffering around me, and Christ suffering in humanity. I am made more aware of limited recourses around me. I am immersed in a culture that has rooted itself in dynamics and principles that produce on many levels spiritual conflict for the life of a Jesus-follower. What this pushes me to do, not always without tears and frustration, is to move in closer toward greater dependency and dialogue with Jesus.

These last 3 years have been filled with experiences of Jesus challenging me to open my eyes to a bigger perspective of what He is doing, even when the next thing or the need before me has not been taken care of. There are times when it looks impossible to continue in what I believe God is calling us at imagine to do. These experiences of living life in serving my King are encounters that aren't neat and easy, yet the object of my faith, Jesus, is always made bigger, stronger, and kinder towards me, as I walk through those experiences. In running into the arms of Jesus, I find guidance, comfort, clarity, forgiveness, courage, and the grace to deal with my discouragement, doubt and frustration. He draws me back to that vulnerable place of worth and value and reminds me I am worth something to Him. That I do belong to Him and in spite of all that has not happened, I can depend on His Face to show me the way and Truth for my next step. He reminds me of keeping myself in balance with my gifts and knowing that He accepts me in my inadequacy. He is the one who is overcoming and will overcome. He is the one, by His Spirit, who is giving me His mind and thoughts, and His passion for living a life fully devoted to Him.

I am sharing the daily reminder Jesus takes me through as a way to encourage you as well, to stay on your knees and let Him show you the way. It is easier on some days than others, and I may not feel as needy, but as Jesus drew away to be with the Father, I too am called to draw away with them and

rest, restore, listen and discover daily the God who is far more than I can imagine. This is what I am called to share with others as well as continually discover myself.

What I am seeing in the lives of the people I work with, mostly women, students and post graduate students, as well as the homeless, is this: I am seeing the deep need for many to connect to the person of Jesus and to truly find their value and worth out of this relationship of love and being called beloved. Many women know of him, and have accepted him, but do not see that he gives women our true sense of our femininity, our value, beauty, uniqueness. He does this for men in their sense of masculinity as well.

On the face of Jesus we see all that the Father is for us. So many forget, or have heard negative “scripts” from their past as well as life circumstances that keep them from hearing the truth about how loved and valued and important they are. The constant struggle to overcome and persevere in the middle of financial struggle, physical struggles, mayhem and chaos are reminders to many how unimportant they are. They feel overwhelmed and only hear the old scripts. What I see Jesus doing is inviting them to let Him draw them close to His heart. Yes, it is about intimacy with Jesus.

Many live out their awareness of God not in their hearts, but in their heads. Jesus wants a connection to our hearts. This takes a willingness to let him into all those places that are not safe for us to let anyone in, let alone Jesus. What I see Jesus doing is helping them, by His Spirit, to choose to let Him in. Once they see Him for who he is, and not what their old scripts distort Him to be, healing takes place. They hear Him, and are encouraged to draw near to him, and in turn the Spirit helps them in doing this.

We are in a culture that has many tools to try to enable one to become enlightened. We are in a culture offering ways to try to answer questions of self awareness, empowerment, love, intimacy, creativity, femininity, masculinity, and spirituality. We see bits and pieces of truth trying to break through, but it has another face, and does not stand up to the holiness of the One who calls us beloved.

Pray that more and more connect to the person of Jesus and that imagine/Northampton is able to love, encourage, and bless them in this process. We are working to find more ways to connect to the town and community. We are looking at our vision, in the original Prospectus, and we are revisiting the possibility for a café and performance space. We will need to raise much support for this and will ask you to continue to pray and support the work of imagine. Our lease is up in July and we do need to find a larger space for the Sunday Gatherings as well. Pray with us for discernment, wisdom, financial resources, and people to help make this happen.

I have been so blessed at how God has used so many of you to get us through each week. By your prayer support, cards of encouragement, and gifts of money we have been held together in the kindness of God’s grace. We are aware how much we depend on Him and on what you give. I know I have not shared or spoken to you much, but I am aware of you, and your stories and your faces. I lift you up in prayer and want you to know I am blessed by what you have given to imagine.

I am an introverted person by nature, which is odd because of what I am called to do, but I want you to know from my heart that you all have humbled me by your generosity and kindness. For many of us it can be hard to be humbled, but it also can be a beautiful place of surrender to my Jesus. I have been in this place for awhile and I want you all to know it has made me rely more on Him and His kindness through others.

Thank you for your love, prayers and friendship over the years. May you have a blessed Christmas.



JENN SWICK:

I've been a part of imagine for over a year now, having joined while I was working on a Master's at UMass, Amherst, and since deciding to stay in the area, rather intentionally, to be a part of the community. What I've experienced with this group over the year was feeling welcomed, cared for, valued, and encouraged to discover how "I" am made to play an integral part of a larger purpose. The past year working with Tricia has been a time of healing and a time to discover Jesus as my closest friend. I had not known the depths of His love for me, and desire to uniquely care for me, all of me. Because I've experienced this love, I now know why people want to share their faith, and I've noticed a new sense of hope to pray for those around me (two things that were missing even having grown up as a Christian).

I've been a part of the inward/OUTWARD Spiritual Formation classes, which centers on this very topic: knowing Christ intimately genuinely motivates you to join Him in the mission around you. I often feel amazed at how I see this process unfolding in my life without my control. The class and working with Tricia, have taught me steps in how to live a lifestyle of intimacy with Jesus. From that I have found I am incredibly more aware of and drawn to people I cross paths with; the woman on the bus, the students I work with, my co-workers, new friends I'm making in town. I'm discovering that Jesus' heart is full of love for the people around me and He is inviting me to show this kind of love through very real everyday human interactions: smiling, offering myself in relationship, caring, showing interest, listening, honoring people around me, speaking encouraging words, etc. These things didn't always feel genuine or self-less before because I often used them with to serve my own aims.

In many ways I feel I am a product of what imagine has set out to do. I can tell the difference in my life (connecting with Jesus, and letting my relationship with him take shape creatively in the world around me) and I can't attribute it to anything except putting into practice what I have learned and noticed from the people here. I am incredibly grateful to have found a group like this at this stage in my life. There's no doubt that what is taking place in me is meant to prepare me for the road ahead.

I'm currently in a place of discovering what being missional looks like as it comes out of my own hands. It's exciting to feel this shift taking place in me (1) because I'm realizing I no longer have to be

controlled by fear, and (2) because I recognize His intimate involvement in the mission with me, it's a journey for me and Him to take together, everyday.



CRYSTAL FRYER:

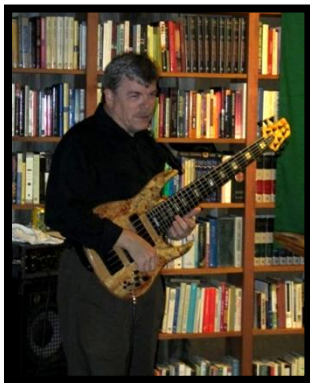
Crystal responded to the following questions I sent out:

- What you think people should pray for regarding imagine?
- What you've been doing in the mission of imagine and/or what God is doing in you through imagine.
- How they might pray for you?

1. For God to set each of us on mission in each of our lives and jobs, to see his kingdom grow in Northampton.

2. God first brought me to Imagine through spiritual direction with Tricia. I was in need of a community and immediately felt the Holy Spirit at work. I have never been part of a community that talks about God's unconditional love as much as Imagine does. As I am a part of the growing kingdom of God at Smith College, I feel imagineers are my partners in bringing the gospel to all of Northampton. The *inward/OUTWARD* Missional Formation Workshop group has helped me grow both in how I relate to God through different disciplines and forms of prayer and in his mission, experiencing His love for me and sharing that with others.

3. For sustained reliance and listening to God in ministry. To feel His love for me and to share out of His abundance.



JIM LAMONTAGNE:

One of the most encouraging aspects of ministry is seeing how God is working in the lives of others. Spending time around the children of Imagine reminds us of the possibilities when we keep our minds and hearts open and soft, particularly when we see how they are working out their faith in relationship to others.

The Hill children accompany their parents to deliver meals to others; to give rides to and help out a senior citizen who loves to come to our church but can't drive and struggles with poor health. Liam reached out to a WWII veteran at a Veteran's Day celebration with an unexpected hug. Later he told me that he hated to see him cry. I have seen Isaac being so kind and tender with the younger boys, modeling patience and character. I have seen Iris use her creativity to make cards for her teachers telling them how much she appreciates them.

On Sunday, December 4th almost all of the children from Imagine participated in a walk that raised awareness and funds for those affected by domestic violence. It was wonderful to see them - bundled in coats and gloves - walking for a cause that would have stirred the heart of our savior.

Since our mission is to help people discover the God who is far more than they imagine, my role as a Teaching Catalyst is to expose people to the Scriptures and the God of the Scriptures. We have done two recent series on How God Moves People to Mission. This series looked at a number of Biblical character studies; uncovering their motivations and vision for God's mission. It is our conviction that people need to be continuously challenged by the person of Jesus. So, we also looked deeply into the Radical Edge that Jesus calls us to in the Gospel of Mark. Imagine/Northampton is not about serving ourselves, but serving the world with Gospel of Jesus Christ; communicated in a variety of ways, not the least is our lives.

Personally, Karin and I are continuing to build our relationships with our neighbors by serving and friending them. Liam also has led us into relationship with parents we would not have known, if not for him.

A Few Pics:



Matt, Henry & Theo Bayne at the 5K Hot Chocolate Run in Northampton



Jeff Loomis, Jon Hill and Some imagine Kids Roasting Marshmallows in Northfield.



Poet Brad Davis Leading a Place & Possibilities Workshop for Creatives in Northampton.



Relaxing at Puffer's Pond in Amherst This Summer.



Jenn, Polly, Karin, Karen, Ashley, Kait & Amy at Ashley's Baby Shower in Northampton.



1FlightUP, Peltier House Concert, in Amherst.

In 2012, we look forward to telling/living Chapter 2 of imagine/Northampton's Kingdom vision of: *Building Kingdom-focused communities which creatively engage the culture to help people discover and follow the God who is far more than they imagine.*

Since moving here, we've faced many challenges, weathered some disappointments, and shown our selves resilient through persistent difficulties we've encountered in the last three years. God's grace has been manifest all along the way.

Our faith has deepened much in the same way as a muscle strengthens through repeated stress. Our best years are ahead of us as we follow Christ into the future for which he beckons us. I can see it much as I saw it before moving here. Our journey has begun, and is beginning into the next steps. They are steps worth taking for a King worthy of giving everything we have.

Please pray for us. Continue or consider supporting our mission financially. Check in on us now and again. We like hearing from you.

Merry Christmas (take time to notice whispers of joy near you) and make time for Christ's peace to wash over you before the New Year. It might take some doing, but go there anyway.

70 Main Street. Northampton, MA 01060 + 413.585.5830 + www.imagenorthampton.org