



common ground montgomery

P.O. Box 1866
Montgomery, Alabama 36102

334.593.5803

www.cgm.life

   @cgmlife

2016

May - June

newsletter

We are gearing up and looking forward to Summer Camp 2016! Our goal is to have approximately 120 youth in the camp Monday through Friday, for eight weeks. Our interns arrive on Memorial Day and the first day of camp for the children is June 6, and the camp runs through July 29. Short of one week, we have an outside volunteer group coming to work with our students during each week of the camp. These groups allow us to have more hands on deck to serve our students and provide an outstanding Summer Camp program for them. In addition to the interns and out-of-town groups, our camp will have a partnership with Auburn University



leslie cowell

2016 summer camp

Montgomery education students as well as counseling students from area universities to meet the education and personal needs of our students while in our program this summer.

The schedule for the camp provides our students with an hour of grade level academic time and an hour of Bible study time in small groups each morning Monday through Thursday. After lunch, the afternoons will be spent in activities with the visiting groups, swimming, and field trips. Fridays will start with a whole group devotional time and be followed with all-day field trips at area museums, parks, and other fun activities!

We are often asked about ways that people can get involved with our Summer Camp program. One big way to help is to provide meals for our interns. We will have a meal site set up where you can sign up to provide either a lunch or dinner for our interns. The link for the site will be up on our CGM website and Facebook page soon. We would also love to have you come volunteer during the academic time or activities time. Another way to help with the Summer Camp is to sponsor a camper's cost for the summer. The cost is \$400 for each lower and middle school student, and \$500 for every high school student that attends.

Participating through any of these ways would help us greatly. As always, thank you for your support of our CGM Summer Camp, whether through funds, food, volunteering, or prayer!



after school program





www.cgm.life



volunteer appreciation banquet



(don't worry, the fire is fake!!!)

Last month in April we had our annual volunteer appreciation banquet and we shared the above picture along with several other staged ones to show what would happen if we didn't have volunteers - SHEER CHAOS!!!

We cannot say enough words of thanks to all our volunteers because you help take our small staff and make us exponentially increase in number providing even more ways to interact with the students in our programs, complete work projects on our building or in our community, and just interact more with our neighbors.



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summer is coming...

Visit www.cgm.life/volunteer for more information on how to volunteer!



Supporting Common Ground Montgomery is easy and simple! The easiest way to support our programs is to give a monthly donation. Give online once and you won't have to think about it again for the rest of the year. Also with a monthly gift of \$50 or more, you will receive a CGM tumbler and t-shirt.

Donate online : www.cgm.life/donate

Mail in your donation : P.O. Box 1866, Montgomery, AL 36102



bryan kelly

Ten years ago, Delta and I were living in Orlando, Florida, and I was finishing up my final exams at Reformed Theological Seminary. We were in anticipation of moving to Montgomery, Alabama, to start Common Ground Montgomery. We packed up everything we owned and moved the first week of June to a temporary rental house downtown. The next day after moving in, I walked onto the football field at Carver High School to participate in summer practices and work outs as a volunteer coach. We had two children, 4 and 2 years old.

ten years ago

All we knew upon arriving was that we would trust the Lord for a lot of unknowns: what neighborhood we would move into, the relative safety of our family, the needed financial support to start a ministry and nonprofit organization, the long-term vision of how to carry out our mission, the building of relationships that would be the context of transformation God was desiring to bring in us and in our neighbors, the volunteers, the board members, the future staff, a long-term house for our family in the heart of a particularly challenging community, the decisions about how to handle schools for the two kids we had (and the three that would follow!), and much more!

These last 10 years have been a beautiful and painful blur. The first few months of our focus consisted of building a board, building relationships with the administration and coaching staff at Carver High School, with the football and baseball players and their parents, and taking every chance I could get to speak to churches, individuals, civic clubs, and anyone who would listen about our mission. We were, at best, about a month ahead with financial donations in the bank the first year.

We chose to not work with the media or police as we engaged the neighborhood. I knew that I simply had no credibility to announce anything from a media standpoint, and that dealing with community and police at the same time would not be possible at first. So, we chose community. So many other people had labored faithfully without any support and publicity. And, trying to cross racial and economic lines would be difficult enough without taking the necessary time to learn about our community and seek to recognize what God had already been doing there for generations. In our understanding, we wanted to come

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in and be a part of the community and listen - to listen to God through the voices, experiences, and perspectives of our neighbors. We trusted God to open up doors even if we couldn't or didn't readily see them as open.

To be honest, we didn't know what those doors would look like. These were some of them. The first couples counseling opportunity I got out of seminary included attempted murder by both parties. I confiscated a pistol at one point after the family car was shot up and later sat in a hospital room after a near death stabbing. Another young man that we began to get to know as a friend and volunteer was shot in the stomach and would have been finished off if not for the gun jamming. He would later admit that he retaliated and shot the other guy once and his gun jammed when he tried to finish the job, also. Another young girl passed out due to blood loss while having a miscarriage in our bathroom, and we had the privilege of making the trip with her and her family to the hospital (first time we met them, literally). Two houses burned down within a block of our house and the families were left with nothing.

We had a neighbor with the nickname Candy Man (he sold various candies from his house) on our street that I had been sharing my faith with and getting to know and he called me in one day to share his fear of a heart condition and an upcoming surgery. We prayed together and he died the next day on the operating table. His family from out of town called me and said they didn't know any ministers and asked would I do the funeral. We did; and with the help of my wonderful neighbor and new friend, Ms. Betty, and incredible partners and staff family, Kevin and Nicole King, we had 75 people over to our house after the funeral for a time of thankfulness and grieving.

Tragedy after tragedy happened quickly, and yet, those very difficult events laid the foundation for credibility, connection, vulnerability, and community. They opened doors and relative trust as we moved forward in beginning various long term initiatives that potentially could bring transformation to all of us.

It's still hard for me to understand what all has happened over the last 10 years. Our next few blogs and newsletters will be an attempt to put words to these experiences. I am amazed that our God has brought so many people to the place of participating in, and potentially being changed by, His work in our little neighborhood. One thing is for sure, He loves to show His wonderful and gracious love to so many of us who are desperate. He brought us here to save us. And, I think He is doing that for a lot of us all over the city and beyond. He is not done with any of us yet and for that I am deeply grateful. Thank you for being such an important part of this unfolding story.

