



common ground montgomery

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[www.cgm.life](http://www.cgm.life)



2016

November

newsletter



# christmas store

December 2016 will mark Common Ground Montgomery's 10th Annual Christmas Store! The Christmas Store has collectively provided thousands of toys for youth in our neighborhood!

We have three very important goals for the Christmas Store: 1) Provide children in our programs the joy of receiving some toys for Christmas, 2) affirm the dignity of adults in our community as they purchase toys at an affordable price instead of us giving them away, and 3) help empower the high school students in the After School Program by giving them an opportunity to invest back into their community through working and serving as they lead this year's store operation.

The Christmas Store dates are: Monday, December 19 - Thursday, December 22, 5:30 PM - 7 PM each day.

If you would like to donate gifts, our office can accept gifts Monday - Friday, 12:30 PM - 5:30 PM, or visit any Montgomery location MAX Federal Credit Union to drop off items, Monday - Thursday 9 AM - 4 PM, and Friday 9 AM - 5:30 PM.

Please attach all receipts to the gift items so we can price them accordingly. Please don't wrap any gifts. And, in an attempt to reflect the students in our programs, if you are buying dolls or Barbie/ Barbie-like toys, please buy them in a myriad of brown flesh tones.

If you would like to help volunteer, or want more information, visit us at [www.cgm.life/christmas-store](http://www.cgm.life/christmas-store) for details.





# community relations update



In the spring, CGM staffer Ken Austin moved into a new position to serve the Washington Park Community as a community relations liaison. Through this new position, CGM partnered with New Walk of Life Church and helped establish the Mercy House.

New Walk of Life Church had an old house in need of much work. After a generous couple paid to add heat and air conditioning to the house, a partnership with both Saint James UMC and Goshen Baptist brought in more people to help with the renovations. New Walk of Life Church, Saint James UMC, Goshen Baptist and CGM are working together to bring to fruition a vision of showing relief benevolence to those in need in the Washington Park Community.

The Mercy House will be mostly

operated by volunteers from the community; giving people in the community an opportunity to serve and to be served.

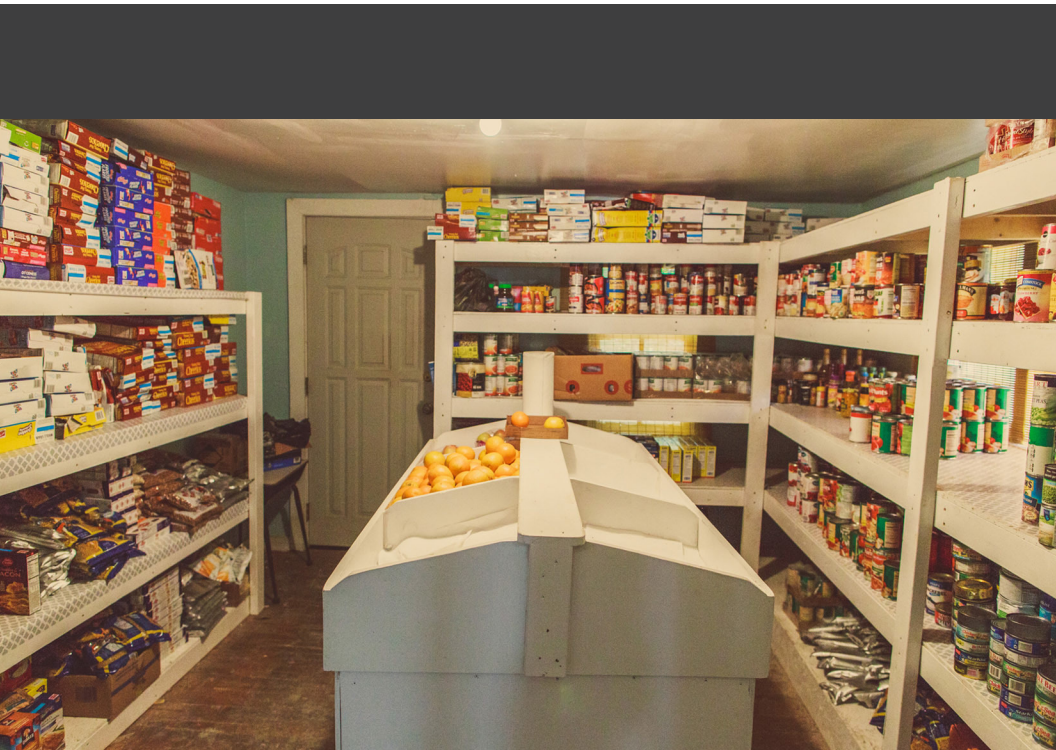
There will be a Food Pantry and Clothes Closet operating Monday through Friday from 10 AM to 7 PM, and on Saturday from 10 AM to 2 PM. The Food Pantry will be stocked to levels capable of serving the food needs of at least 50 families per week. This past Thanksgiving, 200 families were fed through the Food Pantry.

There will also be a kitchen capable of serving people in need of a hot meal during the operation hours. The Clothes Closet will offer clothes to those in need whether for work, school, or for just basic life needs. The house will also have two full bathrooms with showers, allowing those without homes or without running water in their homes to take hot showers. There will also be two washing machines and two dryers for use by those that may need them.

The Mercy House will have a study and a room available for counseling or homework with two online computers and printers available during operations hours for use to look for jobs, take care of online business, or to do school homework.

There will also be a sitting room for any that want to stop by and sit for a spell, maybe watch television, or play a game of pool or checkers.

If you would like to serve or help out in anyway, please contact Ken Austin at 334.398.0467, or [ken@cgmlife.org](mailto:ken@cgmlife.org).







# after school program



# [www.cgm.life/donate](http://www.cgm.life/donate)

Thanksgiving is over and before you know it Christmas will be here and gone! Ready or not, the holidays are fast slipping by and there's no better time than now to start budgeting for your monthly giving in 2017.

CGM makes it easy for you with our online giving program. Your friends and family will know you care about them, your city, and the youth of the Washington Park when you make a donation in their honor. You can go to [www.cgm.life/donate](http://www.cgm.life/donate) and enter their name and address in the notes section and they will receive notification of your Christmas gift made in their honor.

As our programs continue to grow, we need your help now more than ever. With the addition of the Pre-K, counseling program, and the addition of 50 more children, we are looking to donors to help sustain these much needed programs in to 2017.

We could not be here doing what we do without you!



I was sitting in the plenary session of a recent conference learning about the differences between relief, rehabilitation, and development regarding helping those in poverty, and I was struck with the idea of the spectacle of our lives as Jesus followers.

Swirling about in my mind I thought about how earlier I was sitting and listening to Jose Osuna, director of external affairs for Homeboy Industries, tell of how he went from sitting in jail wanting to kill a particular Jesuit priest (Father Greg Boyle) to walking into his office and asking for help in



matt wolfe

## the importance of the spectacle of our lives

changing from his criminal past. And from that encounter the man he had once sought to have killed had become not just his employer, but like a second father to him.

I thought about the first time I heard Bryan Kelly, CGM's founder and executive director, talk about a particular drive home with his wife, Delta, and how, while discussing about whether they might become involved in urban ministry, she burst out crying.

"Well, I guess we aren't doing urban ministry," he said he was thinking as he sat quietly, driving.

And Delta, through her tears, said, "I just want to see the face of God."

And the Kellys are still, over ten years later, living in Washington Park, trying to serve their neighbors and their community as they follow after the King.

I imagine, just it has been with the Kellys, so it was with Father Greg Boyle when he founded Homeboy Industries in to combat the lethal absence of hope for gang members in LA, and just as it was for Jose Osuna to go and work with Father Greg; a journey filled with pot holes and sideswiping, gut-wrenching, cheek-stained experiences, but ultimately leading to seeing a bit more of "the face of God" over time.

I doubt any of them thought they might be spectacles to others, whether few or many, or that their stories might be the subject of talks in conferences or plastered on websites, or that any of them are even motivated by such.

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I have an old friend from Boston who once wrote me and said, "Life's been busy; but if it wasn't, what would turn the days into stories?"

I imagine for most, if not all, of us, this is how it really goes; whether in trying to be faithful to one's calling or in just trying to survive in any and every where in between, these are how the stories of our lives play out. We just get busy doing what's before us. And yet, the real spectacle, the spectacle of Jesus, shines, in its own time and in its own way, in the lives of the Jesus followers to those who have ears to hear and eyes to see.

With ten years done, Common Ground Montgomery has been the locale for many stories, many moments, among so many staff, volunteers, college interns, neighbors, friends and antagonists alike. And in these moments, these busy, busy moments, on behalf of CGM, we hope that the spectacle of Jesus has shined through to you. Not that we would be great subjects of your thoughts, but that the beauty and, dare I say, magnificence of Christ might resonate just a little bit more for you; that "the face of God" might be more clearly seen than before.

I remember sitting with Delta not too long ago for a video interview. We talked a little about the story I mentioned earlier, about her and Bryan's drive. And I asked her, "With everything that's gone on, has all this been worth it for you?"

"Yes," she said, "yes it has."

With the end of the year holidays coming, we hope they find you warm and well-fed and in the company of friends and family; but if they should instead find you lonely and in despair, may the grace of God and the peace of the risen King keep you and hold through your Winter, knowing that, in time, the Spring will come, the sun will rise, and that He will wipe away every tear from our eyes.

Thank you for your prayers, support, and for being in the lives of our staff, neighbors, and children.

Hebrews 9:27-28,

Matt Wolfe

CGM Media Director



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