

Word on the Street

Volume I, Issue IX, April 2006 Here's Life Inner City in New York City Matt and Anna Shenk

We're on the Web!



We're pleased to announce that we have launched a new website for our ministry, www.theshenks.org. The site provides an overview of the work we will be doing once we return to New York and report to our ministry full-time. The site also includes a list of links and resources on the topic of urban ministry in America, PDF files of our newsletters and online contributions information. Once our ministries are up and running, the content on the site will be updated regularly with stories, photos and prayer requests. The website for Tech Bridges, Matt's technology program, remains online at www.techbridges.org.

Learning to Hope

The following are thoughts on hope that Anna recently shared when we spoke at West End Presbyterian, our home church in Richmond, Virginia:

When people think about New York City, they often fall into one of two camps. There are those that think of its wealth, power, and influence. Then there are those who think of its poverty, desolation and hopelessness. Neither view is wrong – it is the richest city in the world - but it also contains some of the greatest poverty in our nation.

In the neighborhoods we will be serving, the majority of the children are living in poverty. They will experience things that you and I could never imagine. I think of one young man we know who is floating around in the city's foster care system without a mother or father to call his own. I think about the bright young man in our church's after-school program who recently had to deal with a gun that was brought into the classroom. I think of the tension that hangs in the air for these youth as they play on the sidewalks after school each day.

As I've been praying for the children in our community, I've found myself meditating on the fifth chapter of the book of Romans, which says, "we rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope." It goes on to say that hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out His love into our hearts.

When I think about Crown Heights (the neighborhood in Brooklyn where we'll be living), I'm sometimes tempted to think that there is no hope. God has been showing me through the young men mentioned above that because they have Christ in their lives, they have a hope that deepens with each and every struggle they face.

They have hope in the promise that God has made to us in Jeremiah 29:11, "For I know the plans I have for you...plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

As Matt and I prepare to move into Crown Heights full-time and to begin our ministry, we are being challenged in new ways to put our hope in the Lord. As we think about raising our own family in New York, Matt and I have been praying and talking through what it will be like to raise children in the neighborhood, a neighborhood completely unlike the places we grew up.

God is using this to challenge us to put our trust and hope in Him alone. We are learning that no matter what we or our future children go through, there is nothing can separate us from the love of Christ.

We believe that God loves the people of New York City and that He is doing a great thing there. He is transforming lives, one at a time. As He's transforming lives, He is bringing hope – in the form of Jesus Christ – into communities that often seem hopeless.

Prayer and Praise

- Please pray that we would be people of deep hope and faith. Please pray the same for the church in Crown Heights and all believers throughout the city of New York.
- Thank you so much for your ongoing prayers. We are thanking God for increased activity in our support raising. The past few weeks have been filled with meetings with potential partners and we are praying that the momentum would continue so that we can report to our ministry in New York as soon as possible.
- We are praising God for the arrival of our first niece, Rebecca Grace Shenk, born to Matt's brother and sister-in-law, Brian and Susan Shenk, on March 27. Please join us in praying for continued good health for both Rebecca and Susan as they recover from the delivery.

Thank you so much for your partnership! We hope you are encouraged by being part of what God is doing in and through us.

Grace and peace,

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