

Word on the Street

Volume I, Issue II, August 2005 Here's Life Inner City in New York City Matt and Anna Shenk

Being in the Minority: A Letter from Matt



Anna and I are now in what I call our “nomadic lifestyle” phase. All of our belongings are in storage except for some suitcases, a cardboard box of food and two Rubbermaid containers that comprise what I like to call our PUO, that’s Portable Urban Office. We have about four months until we move into our next apartment in Crown Heights, Brooklyn. The first two months we’ll be spending here in New York apartment sitting throughout the summer for friends. After our fourth New York apartment, we’ll head down to Virginia to continue gathering our team of ministry partners for a couple of months and stay with family and friends throughout the state.

Currently we’re staying in an apartment in Crown Heights, the neighborhood we feel God has led us to move into and home of our new church, Greater Restoration. Kids from our church are pictured above in one of their favorite activities: double dutch. Even being here less than a week has been an enriching and introspective experience for me.

I’ve spent the past year volunteering in various underserved communities throughout New York, so I’m no stranger to stepping off the subway in a neighborhood and feeling like I have a sign on my shirt that says, “Doesn’t Belong Here.” In the past few weeks, however, I’ve come to realize that visiting a place is much, much different than living there (and I’m sure I’ll learn this even more once we permanently move in this fall). When you visit an area where you might feel a bit uncomfortable, you know in the back of your mind that you’re there for a short time, and you can leave whenever you want.

Before we started staying in this apartment, I can’t say I ever truly felt like I was in the minority in terms of race. It’s an odd feeling walking around the neighborhood, which is predominantly African- and Caribbean-American, and not seeing another white person at all. It’s different since this is where I’m living now, and will be living in a few months. I don’t feel like a visitor to the neighborhood, but I still feel out of place. It makes me think a lot about people of color who have entered neighborhoods, churches, workplaces, etc. where they have been the only non-white person in that environment. Isn’t the idea of having a feeling of “not belonging” in your own neighborhood somewhat of a paradox?

What’s good is that I like being here in Crown Heights. I really like it, and I can’t wait to move here permanently. I think that there’s comfort in knowing that God has a plan for you and taking part of that plan. Anna and I know that God wants us to move into Crown Heights. I know that it’s not always going to be easy, and that it will be difficult at times. We know that God wants us here for a reason and a purpose, and I can’t think of anything more joyful than being obedient and being part of God’s work in the world.

- Matt

Tech Bridges

In order to focus on raising support so that we can be doing ministry full time, Matt has had to spend considerably less time with Tech Bridges. Even still, God has been faithful and has given us a glimpse at the potential that Tech Bridges has. Matt recently received his second batch of donated computers from a nonprofit organization in Manhattan. The computers will be going to one of Here's Life Inner City's partner churches, which runs an after-school program that Here's Life helped set up. Matt will help them set up the church's first computer center for the after-school program as well as provide them with training on how to run the center. This September, when the after school program starts back up, these inner-city youth will have access to computers and technology that will help put them on a more even playing field academically with their peers in more affluent communities.

Prayer Requests

We are so thankful for all of your prayers. Knowing that our partners are praying for us is so encouraging! In the coming weeks, please pray that God provides us with enough new financial partners that Anna can leave her job at the end of August and head to Virginia with Matt to raise support. We're working hard, but we still have a distance to go until we meet that goal. Please pray that God opens up doors to us and that He helps us meet new people who would like to join our ministry partner team.

Culture Corner

God's Politics: Why the Right Gets it Wrong and the Left Doesn't Get It by Jim Wallis.

Jim Wallis, the founder of Sojourners, a Christian ministry whose mission is to proclaim and practice the biblical call to integrate spiritual renewal and social justice, has written an excellent and already influential new book that looks at the flaws in both the Republican and Democratic parties and the problem of faith in American politics. It's one of Anna's favorite books of late.

New Contact Information for July-August!

Matt and Anna Shenk
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Also, our home phone number will no longer be working, so here is the rest of our info:

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