

Word on the Street

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Here's Life Inner City in New York City

Matt and Anna Shenk

Q&A With Ken Bogen, Pastor, Greater Restoration Baptist Church



Ken Bogen is the pastor of our new church in Crown Heights, Brooklyn.

Matt- "How did the partnership between Greater Restoration and Here's Life Inner City begin?"

Pastor Bogen- "It began in 1998. We were interested in starting an after school program when we saw the need to assist our children in the parish and community. Mark Taft (Co-director of the Here's Life New York City team) came to visit, and as soon as we found the space, we were able to start the after school program."

Matt- "How has the partnership with Here's Life Inner City benefited Greater Restoration and its community?"

Pastor Bogen- "Particularly in the early stages of the after school program we got volunteers from Here's Life, and they helped us with supplies for the children and helped us do outreach around Thanksgiving and Easter with Boxes of Love and Easter gifts for kids. They've helped us through other outreaches we've had, helped to plan on how to do those things. We just went through a job preparation program that Here's Life does and in October we want to take a handful of people and work with them in that process."

Matt- "What is your vision for Greater Restoration Baptist Church?"

Pastor Bogen- "What I'd like for us to become is a church that reflects true community within itself and a church that has compassion for the community it is a part of. As we bring people into relationship with Jesus Christ, we tear down walls and barriers that exist between culture and racial groups as well as poverty, and help people to develop lives that have meaning so that they have the ability to change."

Matt- "In what ways does the church serve the community?"

Pastor Bogen- "Certainly through the after school program. We are also developing an adult education program including a GED and job preparedness. Also summer camps and all sorts of youth outreach. We do a lot of crisis intervention as well. We have had people who couldn't pay their rent and helped them pay their rent. Also, we get food from Here's Life occasionally and help families who don't have enough to make a meal for themselves."

Matt- "Is there anything else you'd like to tell me about the church?"

Pastor Bogen- "What is really important to me is that we are a reflection of the kingdom of God, and it's really important that we reflect the community and be multiracial and multicultural and build off of that. Not just be multiracial in word, but in deed. You can be a church that has black people, white people, etc. and not actually be a multiracial church. To actually be that church, you have to do the hard work of tearing down barriers and getting to the root of problems that exist between races and cultures. We want everybody to be able to bring who they are to the table."

Walking the Gang Plank

From Anna's Journal, Dated August 11, 2005

This morning, as I prayed about putting in my resignation at the Boys & Girls Club, I couldn't help but picture myself walking the gangplank of a pirate ship. With great trepidation, I was staring out at a landless sea wondering how long I could survive in the icy ocean before a certain and painful death.

I was the kid who went out and found her first job literally the day she got her driver's license. I've come to depend on – and unfortunately trust in – the twice monthly paycheck.

Sure, I had shared with a number of friends how God miraculously gave me peace about finances when Matt left his job and we moved to one salary. But it is altogether different when God calls you to completely cut the apron strings. I wish that I had something super spiritual to say now, like "all my trust on thee is stayed" as the old hymn says. But I cannot.

It takes a miracle of God, moving by His Spirit as I pray with my husband, to remind me of the most fundamental truths of the Christian faith. When God calls us to step out in faith, to walk the gangplank into the unknown, so to speak, it is not icy waters that await us but the warm embrace and capable hands of a Father who catches us and lifts us up on eagle's wings.

And so I make the leap from the gangplank today, trusting in the Father that is more than able to provide and has proven His faithfulness time and again.

Heading South: Your Help Needed!

We will be on the road all of September and October. Our home base will be Anna's parents in Richmond, VA, but we're also going to Washington D.C., Northern VA, Southeastern VA and Charlotte N.C. We'll probably be adding other side trips as well.

As you probably know, our personal network of friends is not big enough to raise all the funds we need to begin our ministry. We are looking for two critical pieces of help. For those of you who live in the South, we are looking for folks to host small dinner parties or desserts for us where we can share with your friends about our ministry. From our friends up North and those down South, we are looking for referrals to individuals and churches who may also be interested in hearing about our ministry. Please be praying about how you could help us with this critical task. Thanks!

New Contact Information for Sept. and Oct.!

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