

RECONCILIATION REPORT

THE WESTSIDE STORY



Che, Barb, and Barb

A couple of weeks ago, after hearing how a young man shot his friend in the foot, the bullet also ricocheting into his eye, I realized that we're in a setting for a reality TV show: *The Westside Story*. Some troubles are too strange for fiction, and others too serious for satire. How many dire circumstances can be contained in one small community in one week? The only continuity in the show would be a calendar.

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Possible story lines: Why is the shirtless guy having profane arguments week after week with a variety of women, out in the open? What is the dude thinking who works only until he decides he doesn't want to work and asks to be brought home? How do you deal with a secret suicide attempt? What will happen to a recently married couple thrown out by the wife's relative, who seems to have stolen the identity papers and wallet of the husband (the wife is now in jail)? How can a guy lose his state ID, a second time within a few months? How do you deal with dangerous attractions? Can you actually rid yourself of marijuana traces after one week? How many phone numbers can a person accumulate within a year?

Shows could chronicle those being evicted, or those just evicted with, it appears, no place to go. Or those who, for one set of reasons or another, are without food, with hungry kids. What happens when several rival gangs are thrown together due to another housing project closing? What did [insert nickname, e.g. Biker] of the Chattanooga Police Force actually do? Who really represents the residents and who does not, and does the newspaper understand? What about those currently in jail, who cannot help their families in bereavement? What do you say to guys who actually live with their girlfriends at the Westside, but are on a criminal trespassing list for that location? They show up for a job program and are promptly arrested (eventually resolved). We could highlight African refugees thrown into all this drama, who form an insular sub-culture within the project (one of them received Christ, began attending church and became pregnant as a young teen).



Jeremy and our partner Fletcher

Who is adequate for these things? We certainly aren't. Jesus was adequate for the multitude of needs that walked his way. He healed or provided wisdom or exorcized or otherwise fixed it (Matt. 12:15; 14:14; 15:30-31; Mark 1:34; Luke 4:40). Everyone with faith was helped, to my knowledge. He never lacked resources, composure or wisdom.

The Westside Team members who attempt to engage and love and help simply do not know

what to expect each week. There is little continuity. We ask God for divine appointments and try to identify and meet needs in situations where we hardly have time to pray. But God uses them to give people new chances, food in the frig, comforting prayer, a reliable friendship and evidence that God still shows up, maybe with furniture in the van, a New Testament, and the offer to study the unchanging Scriptures together.

Jeremy and Chanet Faber are co-workers who came to Chattanooga with the express purpose of planting an inner city church. He works in IT for Blue Cross. They, with a colleague at work, Dawn Coulter, invest Thursday evenings and Sunday afternoons at the Westside, laying the foundation of a church. It's frankly discouraging. One or two or three may come and then not come. A guy may come a few weeks, appreciate the teaching, then nothing. Jeremy emailed over the Thanksgiving holiday:

I also wanted to tell you that Sunday went well. We walked around and visited people and knocked on various doors. It was pretty awesome as we shared and prayed with a lot of different people. One young lady W... was in tears as we prayed and talk with her. It is something that I can't wait to do again, as it well received. We have a prayer list and list of names and address of people that we visited. Our message consisted of knowing Christ and expressing the family of God as we talked to these individuals. Basically, we wanted them to know that they are loved.

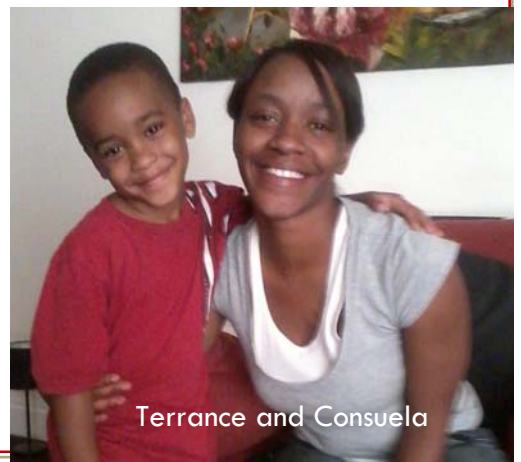
Here are some reflections on the work from Kristie Grootius: "Faith in small things has repercussions that ripple all the way out. In a huge, dark room a little match can light up the place." Joni Eareckson Tada

It seems that God is lighting little, small matches in the Westside to be a light in a very dark and lost community. One of those small matches is an effervescent 21-year-old woman named, Consuela. Consuela lives at Ridgeway Apartments now, but used to "stay" at the Westside and described it to my Sunday School class as a very "dark place". God has touched Consuela's heart, and she hungers for His Word and presence in her life. In many ways, the culture of dependence on government assistance that exists at the Westside seems to contend against the message of dependence on God. However, God has impressed my heart to follow in faith the small steps of relationship that He has built between Consuela and me. At times I am tempted to feel that I cannot really make a difference, and then I remember that it is not about me. This is not my work, but a work that God is stirring. My prayer is that I will be faithful in the small things with Consuela as God builds a BIG faith in her heart that she seems compelled to joyously share with those around her.

Currently the Team has about a dozen members, all of whom aren't able to come each week due to health or travel or work, but who intercede. RMNi has been the channel of over \$5,000 in serving at the Westside in 2012. Of course, much besides has been donated directly in time and gasoline and in material goods. We are the debtors. We're encouraged despite the chaos and conundrums. It's beautiful to see God showing up week after week. And one more theme for the show—the love coming and going in all directions at the Westside.



Terrance and Consuela



S. SUDAN TRIPS: 2013

“‘Crazy’ is living a safe life and storing up things while trying to enjoy our time on earth, knowing that any millisecond God could take your life.”

Francis Chan We need teachers, medical workers, evangelists, youth workers, networkers, & professionals.

Dates: Feb. 9-22 (to the national capital of Juba area)

July 13-27 (to the Torit, E. Equatoria area)

Cost: The RMNI fee is \$2,300—additional costs are roundtrip airfare, visas, immunizations and outfitting.

Apply at www.RMNI.org or call 423-822-1091 for information. The earlier you lock in airfares, the less expensive the trip. God has the money. Visit

www.rmni.org/global-and-short-term-missions/sudan.html



Prayer and Praise



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↑ Choice workers are still needed for the two planned trips to S. Sudan in 2013. Please pray also for their funds to come in.

↑ Wisdom is needed. Here are some areas: (1 for selection of a web designer and webmaster (2 for accountability oversight of 3 projects in S. Sudan (3 how to complete the AFAM missionary census (4 to daily identify and pursue the Lord's priorities (5 to best assist in the work of volunteers

↑ Leaders at the Westside and in S. Sudan are much more unified!

↑ Encouragement for workers at the Westside, particularly during winter, when people are not out and it's cold.

↑ For safe delivery of the block machine that is now moving to S. Sudan from Uganda.

↑ For continuation of a Bible certificate program for Christian workers in Juba, S.

Sudan and for completion of 2013 courses for 5-6 who are enrolled in a master's program in Uganda.

↑ Pray for completion of land acquisition in Torit for Bible school, etc.

↑ For the salvation of many gang-bangers and others in darkness, for good jobs for those who will work, and for continued peace among the gangs.

↑ For the solid establishment of a church at the Westside.