



# The GUM Letter

## 10th Anniversary Edition

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### A Word From our Board Chair

On behalf of our board, I welcome you all to our 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration. During our early formative years, several things became clear to us. One was that GUM should not rush into ministry activity until we had spent time learning about our neighborhood and meeting those who already served there. Also clear was the value of seeking partners who shared our desire to serve in the name of Jesus. God has faithfully honored our prayers. One very recent example was a health forum we hosted in April. Present in the room were many church leaders, health professionals and community leaders concerned about the health needs of the Mission District, and interested in ways to collaborate around the key issues. Such a picture stirs in us deep gratitude for the many, and growing partners we have served with over the last 10 years:

- Mission Presbyterian Church, Redeemer Community Church, SF Church of the Sojourners, and, of course, Grace Fellowship Community,
- Foundation and corporate donors, too numerous to list who have generously provided funds and in-kind donations,
- Community agencies and non-profits who taught us much about the city and neighborhood, and supported our efforts,
- and the many individual supporters who have shared our church-centered vision of serving the city in Jesus' name.

To all of you, THANK YOU, for your support and partnership. - Dick Huey

The GUM Letter is a publication of Grace Urban Ministries, a church-centered nonprofit serving youth and families in San Francisco. For more information, contact Craig Wong at:

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## Past to Present -Pastor Sharon Huey & Craig Wong

1983-1995

### *Theological Foundations & our Move to the Mission District*

Today, we celebrate God's faithfulness for 10 years of Grace Urban Ministries (GUM), birthed from the congregation of Grace Fellowship Community Church. When Grace Fellowship is healthiest, we see ourselves as something of an "experiment". We want to practice that the gospel isn't a precise script for how to behave in the world, but a life-long, joyous invitation to learn to ask better questions - of the gospel, the world, and ourselves - and then to live in such a way that our life together raises questions for those around us about what God might be up to. Beginning in 1983, under the pastoral leadership of Bob Appleby, our faithful pastor for over two decades, we set out to answer two questions: What does it mean to be the Church? (the theological question), and what does it mean to be the Church in San Francisco? (the contextual question). Filling out the answers to these as we listen to Scripture, slowly unlearning our habits of sin, and learning to love God and each other in the midst of congregational life continues to be an adventure.

It was revolutionizing for the forty of us who began as Grace Fellowship to hear Bob teach the Scriptures as our Story, one we indwell as well as articulate. We thought we knew this Book and we thought we knew the Church, but hearing Scripture *together*, and embodying the good news *together*, challenged our impoverished thoughts about the church as a place of frenetic activity, shallow social relationships, and good deeds done in a vacuum. That might be "good religion" but it isn't the Church God longs for, or anything which demands our lives. To hear Bob teach the Sermon on the Mount, take us through the prophet Amos, or preach through Ephesians, was to imagine the Church in God's scheme of things, and to have this vision both expose idols we didn't know we trusted, and reveal longings we didn't know we had.

We began to see that the Church was an "outpost of the Kingdom." John Bright's book, *The Kingdom of God*, compelled us to hear Scripture around that theme. We began to learn from the models of Church of the Sojourners in Washington D.C. and La Salle Street Church in Chicago, that church life could be about so much more than keeping an institution afloat, but rather learning what matters to God and conforming our whole lives to this. We began to see that it was the Church's task not just to make the announcement that the Kingdom of God was at hand, but to *be* that announcement. Our shared life-- the ways we worship, raise our children, make decisions about money, lifestyle and work, love one another *and* the strangers in our community—this is *all* Kingdom work.

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**1996-2003**

***Learning How to be Church-centered***

Grace Educational Mentors, or GEMs, was the first ministry that GUM started. While having an academic mentoring program made sense for our neighborhood, we wanted to ensure that this ministry truly served, rather than compete with, the life and mission of our Church. Facilitating conversation among church school leaders, pastoral staff and tutors-to-be, we began the practice of asking better questions about church-centered ministry. Is the life of the body being matured while we serve? Do our ministry involvements help or harm our discipleship? Are decisions pastorally discerned, or just need-driven? What is the relationship between worship and service? How does Word and Sacrament inform our understanding of justice and compassion? How are our services distinct from the many admirable secular nonprofits that thrive in the progressive San Francisco landscape?

With each new ministry came more questions. What exactly are folks experiencing when they enter our doors? Merely a program, or a loving community of people who have cast their lot with one another? How do we help kids succeed in school, or prepare for work, without making an idol out of education? How do we come alongside parents and families in a way that takes the challenges of employment, healthcare, and housing in San Francisco seriously, without making it merely about achieving the American Dream? Does our life together, in word and deed, point our neighbors to the larger hope of the gospel? These are questions we continually ask.

**2004-present**

***Making Community Friends,  
Building Ecclesial Partners***

In 2004, Reverend Mauricio Chacon of Mission Pres shared his concern about growing numbers of diabetes-related illnesses among our mostly-Latino neighborhood, and invited us to help him host a health fair to address this problem. Thanks to his invitation, the health fair became GUM's first major effort in bringing together multiple congregations in a joint ministry. Grace Fellowship, Redeemer Community Church, Church of the Sojourners, of course, Mission Pres, and most recently, SF Christian Center. Such partnership brings forth much fruit. For instance, we are able to serve our neighborhood in ways that would otherwise not be possible. We have the opportunity of learning about the gospel, and the communities we serve, through brothers and sisters who are different than ourselves. And lastly, by working together in such ecclesial demonstrations of unity, the neighbors we serve and the many agencies we collaborate with can taste good news of great joy...that the Kingdom of God is indeed at hand. †

**Our 3rd Annual Community Health Fair is here!**

On Saturday, October 21st, we will coordinate, for a third straight year, the joint efforts of Mission Presbyterian Church and Grace Fellowship Community Church in hosting what is now called the "Mission Church Health Fair," once emphasizing diabetes risk and education. And as in past years, we will enjoy the partnership of Redeemer Community Church, SF Church of the Sojourners, but will also have representatives from Dolores Park Church and SF Christian Center! We are also grateful for the growing contribution being provided by community partners such as Mission Neighborhood Health Center, St. Anthony's Free Clinic, and SF General Hospital, in specific, the diabetes promotoras program. Collectively, they are providing more health professionals than in previous year, making possible the ability to serve more residents than ever before. Also exciting is the development of improved follow-up for folks who come, strengthening ways to insure that those with high risks situations are referred to those agencies that can help them. We ask for your continued prayers, that Christ might be glorified as His people work together at the fair.

**GUM's story to be shared at CCDA Philadelphia, and the National Outreach Convention in San Diego**

We thank God for ways that our 10 years, albeit young, of experience can be of encouragement to others who are considering ways for the congregations to care for their cities. We will share our congregation-based story at the Christian Community Development Conference through workshops on "Redistribution" and "Why Ecclesiology Matters." At the San Diego venue, Craig will speak on a World Vision-sponsored panel on "Models of Hope," which highlights the possibilities churches have to engage and serve their neighborhoods in the name of Jesus. We ask for your prayers for these two opportunities.

*We are grateful beyond words for all of you who have prayed for, labored in, and given generously to, the work of Grace Urban Ministries over the past ten years.*

**THANK YOU!!!!**