



Entrusting to God What's Next

Due to our facility renovation, we're sad to say goodbye to our Grace Educational Mentors (GEMs) tutoring program after 14 continuous years of service. We'll miss our time with the kids each Tuesday & Thursday afternoon, many with whom we've traveled for many years, including some who have become tutors themselves, for example, Wayne Mak (read his article) who began GEMs as a third grader. Over the years, we've grown in our understanding of what it means to love our kids as Christ loves them. As a congregation, we've asked ourselves what it means to see each other through God's eyes, and GEMs has provided a concrete place for us to live this out.

As we look to future forms of educational or other youth-related ministry, we're grateful for this interim season to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of the GEMs program, and the ways that God is growing us as leaders and as a team. Craig Wong's article "The Gift of Change" describes well the things we've been learning during this time. Though we have much we could be anxious about, we have so much more to look forward to.

Please pray that we would continue to see our neighbors through the eyes of Christ, and to fully invest in the work He would have us do next. We trust that God will continue to be faithful with whatever ministry he leads us to, just as he was faithful throughout our time with GEMs.

- Jenelle Denson & Amy Hong

Receive our e-Newsletter

Go to www.gum.org/signup

Stay in touch with Grace Urban Ministries, a San Francisco-based nonprofit that serves the Church's mission to bear witness to the just and compassionate reign of Christ.

Grace Urban Ministries

3265 16th Street, San Francisco, CA 94103-3323
(415) 703-6094 (voice) (415) 864-5830 (fax)
inquiries@gum.org www.gum.org

The Gift of Change

- Craig Wong, Grace Fellowship Community Church & Grace Urban Ministries

Whenever the cloud lifted from above the tent, the Israelites set out; wherever the cloud settled, the Israelites encamped

- Numbers 9:18

My cohorts and I find ourselves in the midst of change. Our church and nonprofit offices have been relocated three miles from our neighborhood, things are still in boxes and, to make things worse, telephone and internet access has been problematic at best. Our place of worship is moving to a location in the opposite direction, and into the sanctuary of a parish culturally different than ours. The start time of our Sunday service is changing, to an hour considerably earlier than our bodies are used to. Our clocks are off, our routines decimated. In short, we're in the throes of a major building renovation. →

On Being a GEMs Tutor

- Wayne Mak, Grace Fellowship Community Church

I am glad to have been a tutor in GEMs. It has been such a great gift to me. I really enjoyed spending time with the kids and building a friendship with them. Without GEMs, I would not have had the great privilege of meeting some of the best kids I have ever known, both within our own congregation and outside of it. Although it is good whenever my students are able to fly through their homework, it has also been a good for me to learn how to join them when they struggle with particular homework problems. And when I discovered that I didn't have the knowledge to be able to help the kids with their homework, it was great to have partners that do. And even when they didn't, it was great to have partners to be confused with. I've been extremely grateful for my fellow tutors, who've been with me when the kids were being extra rowdy or distracting that day, and when I did not have the energy to deal with them. Just having partners there encouraged me to not worry about getting it right with a homework question or getting impatient with kids that had trouble focusing on their work that day. There was a Spirit working in GEMs that focused on building a more substantial thing than simply achieving better grades. God is about growing friendships, and not only with those we serve, but with our fellow partners as well. Through this ministry, God has deeply blessed us with the "G" in GEMs, that is...grace!



(Continued from Page 1) But the physical building is not the only thing being deconstructed. So are the things we do, and the way we do them. Ministries and programs we've faithfully, if perhaps mechanically, slogged away at for years need to be significantly altered or even, in some cases, indefinitely suspended. Such change, especially for those of us most given to the familiar and predictable, can be quite threatening. We're addicted to knowing what tomorrow will look like.

One example of "ministry upheaval" has been our beloved after-school tutoring program which has served children of both church and neighborhood for nearly 14 years. For those who have devoted many years in this outreach, questions abound. What will happen to the children once the program goes on hiatus? Will the relationships continue without the weekly structure? How about our relationships as a tutoring team? Do I even have a ministry if I'm no longer tutoring children? Will we even have an afterschool ministry again after the building renovation and, if so, what will it look like?

Such questions can feel quite unsettling, especially when our sense of security, identity or worth becomes wrapped up in the ministries we've invested in. But we're finding that when we're in touch with these feelings, we can recognize the work of the Spirit, mercifully exposing the idols that God wants to liberate us from. We can then repent from such counterfeits, whether it's the need for significance, a sense of accomplishment, or the circumvention of failure. Freed from their tyranny, we can trust God in new ways.

In this season of disorientation, the book of Numbers has been particularly meaningful. We resonate with the stubborn band of Israelites who want the Promised Land, yet keep looking back to imperial Egypt when the going gets tough. Or the initial excitement, and disciplined preparation, for the journey ahead that quickly gives way to complaining, finger-pointing, and waning confidence in the leaders that Yahweh has appointed among them. Or the well-meaning Reubenites and Gadites who choose to settle for less and miss the best. We learn that it is not so easy to watch for the cloud above our tent and wait...or move forward...as the Lord dictates. But when we do, we discover a God whose ways are far bigger than ours. ✚

Connecting Church & School

- By pastor Barbara Cornejo, Community Assembly of God

Our late pastor, Rev. Edward A. Stewart, Community Assembly of God, had a dream and a vision twenty years ago: a youth center that would serve the needs of young people and their families in the Excelsior neighborhood of San Francisco. The beginnings of this dream was recently fulfilled when the Stewart Youth Center received its official 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation status.

This past December 15th was a landmark day for the Stewart Youth Center because we had the privilege of serving breakfast to the teachers of James Denman Middle School, with support from parents from Grace Fellowship Community Church and Redeemer Community Church. This open door was made possible by our new friends at Grace Urban Ministries. The breakfast was a great opportunity to meet the teachers and demonstrate to them that Stewart Youth Center is here to support them. Since the church facility & the youth center are located within two blocks of three high schools (i.e. Balboa, Leadership & Lick-Wilmerding), one Middle School (i.e. James Denman), and San Francisco City College, being able to establish a connection with the schools, as through a breakfast, is a huge step forward in our vision for the community.

Our head pastor, Rev. Mary Stewart, has taken over the reins from her husband and she is continuing to grow this youth center in fulfillment of the vision. Your prayers are needed for guidance as we make plans for future service to the surrounding schools and the many young people of our neighborhood. ✚