

RAY'S OF HOPE

Inspiring stories of hope, healing & redemptive transformation in communities experiencing poverty

IN THE CITY

VOL 1, ISSUE 1 — WORLD IMPACT

RAMON'S & KRIS'S STORIES PRISON MINISTRY



Welcome to Rays of Hope, World Impact's bi-annual publication featuring real-world stories of impact in the city through Church-Based Seminary, Church Planting, Prison Ministry, and Trauma Healing.

Because of your prayer and support, urban leaders receive tools and training to reach their communities with the Gospel.

Restoring Lives in the City

The scope of World Impact's Prison Ministry program includes two main categories: ministry behind bars and ministry for returning citizens.

Pastor Ramon Navarro and prison chaplain Kris Briggs of CrossWind Church in Aurora, Colorado, represent both categories of prison ministry.

CrossWind church began as an exclusively Filipino gathering of believers in a location that was distant from most members.

Pastor Ramon then asked himself, "Will the community miss us if we leave?"

Because he felt that the church's impact was minimal, he prayerfully considered a change in direction and mission.

Today, the church sits in the heart of Aurora and boasts a multi-ethnic congregation of tremendous diversity.

Because of this location and the community's history of juvenile violence, CrossWind now has the opportunity to reach many returning citizens seeking stability, friendship, and instruction for the Christian life.

Pastor Ramon welcomed World Impact's Church-Based Seminary program into the life of the church and began to see members take ownership of the church's ministry to the city.



Pastor Ramon Navarro



Chaplain Kris Briggs with Dr. Don Davis

Instrumental in bringing Church-Based Seminary resources to the church was chaplain Kris Briggs, who has now been in prison ministry for over two decades and currently serves at a women's prison in the Denver area.

With Chaplain Kris leading the effort behind bars and Pastor Navarro supporting returning citizens through World Impact's Onesimus Workshops, CrossWind Church is a champion of prison ministry in Aurora, the Denver area, and across the state of Colorado.



LISA'S STORY



CHURCH PLANTING

Multiplying Kingdom Expansion

A unique aspect of World Impact's mission is our partnerships with church leaders and urban organizations. These groups work in the city to accomplish the same goals we aim to achieve through our four core programs.

Our resources, training, and urban ministry expertise find expression in the daily work of the local church and ministry organizations sharing the Gospel.

One such organization is Central Detroit Christian Community Development Corporation. It is associated with the Christian Community Development Association and serves the people of Detroit through education, employment assistance, economic development, and other areas of community development.

Central Detroit Christian's executive director and founder, Lisa Johanon, has overseen a partnership with World Impact since the early 2000s, when the church planting initiative began to grow.



Lisa Johanon

Lisa and her team were not only trained through World Impact's church planting program—they went on to become church plant training facilitators themselves.

Central Detroit Christian has also welcomed Church-Based Seminary and Trauma Healing training over the last 20 years. Through God's provision of World Impact resources, Lisa is now able to commission Micah and Megan Williams as the next generation of church planters in the heart of Detroit.

The Williamses have lived in Detroit for over five years and are committed to reaching people in the forgotten places of the city. Micah is the son of a pastor and brings an energizing approach to ministry.

Throughout Lisa's partnership with World Impact, she has noticed the unique quality of church plant training she has received and passed on to others.

"They have a heart for the poor—I haven't seen that from any other model."

– Lisa Johanon, speaking of World Impact's Church Planting training

World Impact staff member and seasoned pastor Semmeal Thomas serves as a mentor to Micah and Megan as they raise funds and prepare for full-time ministry.

Pray for Lisa, Micah, and Megan as they expand God's Kingdom in their community.





From Trauma Victim to Healing Facilitator

Before World Impact staff members Lisa and Andy Entz met Corinne Stephens, she was searching—searching for strength to lead her family, support to process past pain, and ways to impact others experiencing similar battles.

The Entz's led Corinne through her first Trauma Healing training in an online group in 2020.

“When Corinne took our training, she had no idea how she was going to use it. She mainly wanted the training so she could better heal from her own trauma,” said Lisa Entz of World Impact.

Corinne's husband, Will, was formerly incarcerated in Lansing prison near Kansas City, and during that time Corinne held her family of four children together. At the time of Corinne's initial training, Andy already knew Will from his work with Brothers in Blue preparing incarcerated men for spiritual and physical flourishing upon release.

Life After Trauma Healing Training

As Corinne reflected on and practiced the Trauma Healing lessons, she began to feel God nudging her to reach incarcerated men, returning citizens, and the families supporting them. She saw Trauma Healing groups as a way to answer God's call.

Corinne has since started healing groups in Lansing prison and received certification as a healing group facilitator.

The Entzes, along with World Impact Prison Ministry Director Rich Esselstrom, helped Corinne lead her first training session inside prison walls in the fall of 2023. Corinne is now leading incarcerated men through healing groups and training some of them to lead their own groups both in prison and upon release.

“God's kingdom is expanding through the work Corinne is doing. Her reach is far beyond what we could ever do. People are receiving healing in Jesus' name and through the power of the Word.”

— Lisa Entz



Corinne Stephens

From Being Trained to Leading Others

Corinne's story is a great example of God's life-changing grace. In only a few years, she has received training, led others to healing, and now teaches others to lead their peers through World Impact's curriculum.

You can learn more about Trauma Healing resources on our website. You can visit our blog to read more stories of hope and healing.



DAVID'S STORY



CHURCH-BASED SEMINARY

From Business Impact to Kingdom Impact

David Hernandez grew up in Mexico City, the largest city in North America. His mother passed away when he was 5 years old, and his father struggled with alcoholism.

Eventually, David left Mexico, immigrated to the United States, and began his business career.

However, he entered a similar lifestyle to his father—alcohol abuse and financial irresponsibility.

One event, however, turned his life around—he decided to accept Jesus as his Lord and Savior.

World Impact staff member Juan Pablo Herrera led David to Christ and eventually invited him to a World Impact conference where he heard Rev. Dr. Don Davis speak about the call to full-time mission work.

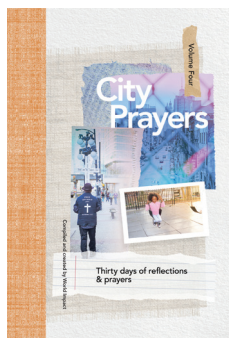
David responded to Dr. Davis' call, began his journey in full-time ministry, and became an intense advocate of World Impact resources. Participating in Church-Based Seminary classes with World Impact allowed him to use his business background to effectively engage in ministry and train others using World Impact resources.

Today, through partnerships and equipping relationships, David is responsible for 28,000 ministry workers across Latin America in churches, jails, and rehabilitation houses.

David Hernandez



David's journey from orphan to businessman to full-time missionary was marked by two things: the saving grace of Jesus and the effective training he received through World Impact's Church-Based Seminary classes.



Do you desire to effectively pray for the city?

City Prayers Volume Four offers Scripture references, devotional reflections, and suggested prayer requests to guide your time with the Lord.

worldimpact.org/resources



Eager Reception in the Dominican Republic

In 2022, World Impact Senior Ministry Developer Chad Wolyn and his wife Fabiola met Hilma (Flor) Barrientos de León online and learned she was interested in Trauma Healing.

Hilma serves as the ministry director over the Caribbean region for Medical Ambassadors International.

Over the next year, Chad began to theorize about what a Trauma Healing trip to the Dominican Republic might look like. In January 2024, his vision became reality in the city of Santiago.

The primary purpose of the trip was to provide support for key ministries that invited World Impact to host training. Secondly, Chad also wanted to introduce various ministries to other programs like Church-Based Seminary and Church Planting to see what could empower more leaders to serve.

“It was really exciting; the response was tremendous.”

—Chad Wolyn, speaking of the enthusiasm of the group

The Wolyns led 35 individuals through an entire week of Trauma Healing group sessions. The group included church pastors, organizational ministry leaders, psychologists, and teachers from all over the Dominican. In addition, 16 members of the group went on to receive certification as trauma healing facilitators.

Some of the healing group participants shared their experiences from the week of training:

“I feel very happy, because although I have gone through a lot personally in each of these issues, it makes me stronger, and I have learned to heal my interior more. It was worth all the effort.”

— Yomaira Ramírez, Monte de Jehovah

“I came in a bit timid, but this has helped me gain confidence and see things from a new perspective. Thank you for being a bridge that God has used to bring peace, love and above all his Word. You are a blessing to many.”

— Engracia Leonardo, Leader of Evangelism Team

“It was better than I expected. What most impacted me was learning simple tools that I can use and teach others so that we can be of help to those that are hurting.”

— Pastor Yudeliki Reinoso, La Iglesia



Trips like this one are only possible through the prayer and support of folks who partner with the work God is doing around the world. Would you consider giving prayerfully or financially? You can do so at worldimpact.org/donatehope

First Barna Research Launch Excites Ministry Leaders

World Impact held the *Empowering Los Angeles* event on Saturday, Feb. 24 at Biola University in La Mirada, CA, which gathered anyone interested in a new research release from World Impact and Barna Group. World Impact President and CEO Rev. Dr. Alvin Sanders presented elements of this research to those in attendance and was followed by a panel discussion of local pastors and ministry leaders who gave commentary on the tangible ministry responses to the research. Attendees received encouragement, invitations to collaborate with other ministries, and a challenge to engage Los Angeles for Christ.

Learn more about *Empowering Los Angeles* at wilinks.org/barna-la-story



Each story in Rays of Hope first appears in Be The Light, our monthly email newsletter.

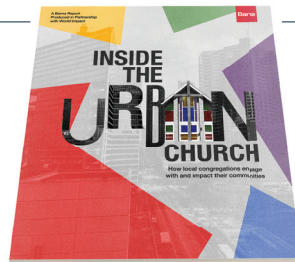
Without you, we wouldn't be able to serve communities experiencing poverty as effectively.

Our partners, trainers, and workers also would struggle to grow their ministries without adequate training.

Be sure to subscribe to World Impact's email newsletter and YouTube page for more stories and ways to engage with God's work among those experiencing poverty.

Discover easy ways to support and amplify the mission of World Impact from anywhere, anytime:

worldimpact.org/bethelight



We believe that trained urban pastors and leaders produce healthy urban churches which nurture flourishing neighborhoods. This study's findings demonstrate that this is not just theory, but reality.

— Alvin Sanders, President & CEO of World Impact

worldimpact.org/inside-the-urban-church



Empowering the Bay Unites Leaders from Across the Bay Area

The next event focused on the Bay Area and took place at Living Hope Neighborhood Church in Richmond, CA, on March 23. Attendees filled the room and expressed their agreement with Dr. Sanders' presentation and the panelist discussion. Local pastors and leaders were encouraged to make their church buildings available to community life on days other than Sunday to reach their communities with the Gospel.

Learn more about *Empowering the Bay Area* at wilinks.org/barna-bayarea-story



Thank you for supporting the mission of World Impact through our friendship and ministry together. Your prayer, encouragement, care, and financial gifts are helping spread the Gospel in communities experiencing poverty all over the world by empowering leaders with ministry training. You are such an important piece of our call to faithfully equip the Church.



Transforming Communities Together

