



Your twice-a-month e-newsletter from Citygate Network

Useful news and information for members

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The Bahamas Were Devastated

Hurricane Dorian's 185 mph winds crawled through and smashed entire neighborhoods in the Bahamas, leaving behind at least 50 people dead and thousands homeless. The storm then passed close to the Florida, Georgia, and North and South Carolina coasts. Apart from flooding in the Carolinas, the United States was spared the horror of the hurricane. Jimbo Stockton, Executive Director of Beaches Rescue Recovery Mission and President of Adventures in God's Creation in Jacksonville Beach—and a pilot—is continuing to help with recovery efforts for the Bahamian hurricane victims. Jimbo and other local pilots and captains of large boats are collecting and delivering supplies and funds to people in the Bahamas. Please contact Jimbo at the mission if you would like to support this relief effort.

Tornado Hits Sioux Falls, South Dakota

A tornado ripped through Sioux Falls, South Dakota, on September 10. Linda Gonzales, co-CEO of our member mission there, was delighted to report, "The mission properties and all staff members were safe. Although many of the buildings in town sustained heavy damage and people are likely displaced,

we were blessed with God's protection and are happy to be fully operational." Where they could have sustained heavy damages, they were virtually untouched and had only a few puddles of rainwater to mop up.

"This storm has brought the community together, and we've been invited to meet with the city, emergency responders, and other early disaster responders." The mission planned to show up to the meeting in a truck filled with water bottles to share with the victims and the responders. Linda said, "The city will recover and we will dig in wherever we are called."

She asks for prayers for God to bring folks together and for recovery to come quickly for anyone who has been displaced.

District Conferences Getting Underway This Week

Annual gatherings for Citygate Network's nine territories started this week! Several have very high registration numbers; a few of the other events are just now getting the attention of members in those districts. Go to www.citygatenetwork.org>Events to check out the details and to register. The seminars and plenary sessions will be excellent. Here are the dates and places:

Rawhide

September 17–19: Sheraton Fort Worth Downtown in Fort Worth, Texas

Great Lakes

September 17–19: Blue Gate Inn in Shipshewana, Indiana

Bluegrass

September 23–25: Ridgecrest Conference Center in Ridgecrest, North Carolina

Sierra

September 24–26: Courtyard Long Beach Downtown in Long Beach, California

Liberty

September 30–October 2: Spruce Lake Retreat in Canadensis, Pennsylvania

Evergreen

October 2–4: Union Gospel Mission (Spokane)—Center for Women and Children in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho

Heartland

October 7–9: Stoney Creek in Johnston, Iowa



Deep South

October 8–10: Callaway Resort and Gardens in Pine Mountain, Georgia

Northern Lights

Members in our all-Canada district, who gathered in Palm Springs during Citygate Network's Annual Conference, have the option of joining neighboring districts.

Our European Counterparts Are Meeting This Month, Too

Citygate Network President John Ashmen spoke last night at the annual fundraising event for Rescue Ministries of Mid-Michigan in Saginaw. He is spending Wednesday at the Great Lake District Conference in Indiana. After a quick stop back in Colorado Springs, he will travel to Baden-Baden, Germany, to represent Citygate Network at the European Association of Urban Missions (EAUM) conference. This event, held every three years, brings together the administrators and thought leaders from missions throughout all of Europe. Most major cities on the continent have a mission that participates. John will be relating the greeting of our North American members and talking about our rebranding and refocusing. This is his fourth EAUM conference, which has produced numerous contacts and resulted in some excellent international collaboration. Please remember John in prayer during this season of heavy travel and engagement.

Webinar Helps Prepare Members for Holiday Giving Campaigns

Year-end giving is a significant part of every ministry's resource development plan, so it's not too early to start planning your 2020 year-end campaigns. Citygate Network's most recent resource development webinar this week, "Go for the Giving-Season Goal," offered timely tips, insights, and resources to help member ministries prepare for holiday giving campaigns.

The webinar instruction was brought by Julie Larocco, Brewer Direct's explorer strategist. Julie and the team also provided a number of downloadable resources, including the PowerPoint presentation, detailed instructional checklists for various giving seasons, and an Excel calendar that members can customize for their own use. Members can view the webinar and download the resources for free by logging in to Citygate Network's webinar archives.

Available for a Limited Time Only!

While organizing the storage area at our new building, we unearthed the last four AGRM button-up shirts ever! If you would like to own a little piece of history, speak now! We have a Men's XLT, Men's XL,

Men's L, and Women's 2XL. They are all khaki/beige with the blue and white AGRM logo. We'd hate for them to go to waste—they'd make a great paint smock, if nothing else! If you are interested, please email Alice at agifford@citygatenetwork.org and let her know which one(s) you want, and she'll get them to you for the cost of shipping.



Minneapolis City Program Paves Way for Better Communities

Some underserved Minneapolis residents cannot safely access jobs or transportation or even be out on their streets. Our Streets Minneapolis is a nonprofit organization created to encourage street and transportation accessibility and thus build community. In a *Star Tribune* article by Peyton Burruss, reference is made to claims that interstates have hurt minority groups, perpetuating racism and segregation by destroying and dividing communities. Since transportation systems affect how people can access jobs and whether they are able to walk safely on their streets, Our Streets has introduced a number of initiatives built around using transportation as a connector. They want to provide underserved Minneapolis communities with financial resources to acquire bikes and also connect with them to discover what they want from transportation systems. Open Streets encourages walking and biking through neighborhoods. They also set up events and festivals that draw people out and promote communities that don't think of streets for more than cars.

Church Leaders Charged with Using Homeless People as Forced Labor

A dozen leaders of California-based Imperial Valley Ministries (IVM) are accused of using dozens of mostly homeless people as forced labor, forcing them to surrender their government benefits and panhandle up to nine hours a day, six days a week, so the leaders could reap the financial benefits, federal prosecutors said. According to a Fox News report, the defendants, including an ex-pastor, are charged with forced labor, conspiracy, document servitude and benefits fraud. They are accused of scamming victims into rehabilitation homes, forcing them to hand over their welfare benefits and later holding them against their will by confiscating identification cards, driver's licenses, passports and immigration papers. "The indictment alleges an appalling abuse of power by church officials who preyed on vulnerable homeless people with promises of a warm bed and meals," U.S. Attorney Robert Brewer said. IVM may have some 30 church affiliates throughout the U.S. and Mexico. The church claimed to "restore" drug addicts at its group homes, but many of the victims didn't require rehabilitation. All the alleged victims have been freed.

Charitable Deductions Respond to Tax Incentives

In 1917 legislators carved out a tax break that still shapes our tax law today, known as the charitable deduction. According to Kelsey Pi's article for *Future Perfect*, nonprofit organizations used to be funded near-exclusively by the ultrarich in the early 20th century, but now they are funded by people across all economic sectors. The most recent shifts to the tax code have resulted in just over 10 percent of taxpayers itemizing their taxes, meaning that only 10 percent of taxpayers are now incentivized to charitably donate. The U.S. could consider revising the laws to give a uniform credit or deduction for contributions, as they do in Canada, since charitable giving does seem to respond to incentives.

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Study Confirms Faith as Effective Tool to Prevent or Recover from Addiction

A new Faith Counts study authored by father-daughter research duo, Brian and Melissa Grim, and published in the *Journal of Religion and Health*, looks at the role of religious and spiritual faith in preventing and recovering from substance use disorder. At any given time, there are 20 million Americans afflicted with a substance use disorder (SUD). One of the most effective tools to prevent and/or recover from addiction is often overlooked—faith. Extensive evidence-based research on addiction shows that the efficacy of faith includes not only the behaviors people engage in (or don't engage in) because of their faith and the support people find in belonging to faith communities, but also people's religious and spiritual beliefs themselves. The study found that 73 percent of substance abuse treatment programs incorporate spiritual components. Up to 82 percent of clients who experience a spiritual awakening during substance abuse treatment and recovery were completely abstinent at a 1-year follow-up compared with 55 percent of non-spiritually awakened clients. Access to the full study is available [here](#).

Forty-Seven Percent of American Adults Uncomfortable Using Gender-Neutral Pronouns

As the experiences of people who don't identify as a man or a woman have gained attention, a majority of Americans say they have at least heard about using gender-neutral pronouns. A Pew Research Center study revealed that age and political affiliation are major factors in Americans' awareness. Seventy-three percent of Americans ages 18 to 29 say they have heard about people preferring nonbinary pronouns, compared with 65 percent of those ages 30 to 49, 54 percent of those ages 50 to 64, and 46 percent of those 65 and older. About 32 percent of adults ages 18 to 29 personally know someone who goes by these types of pronouns, compared with smaller shares of older adults. A quarter of Democrats and Democratic-leaning independents say they know someone who prefers

being referred to using gender-neutral pronouns, versus 11 percent of Republicans and Republican-leaning independents. There are also notable differences by age and party on who feels comfortable using gender-neutral pronouns when requested, with young adults and Democrats more comfortable than older Americans and Republicans. Overall, just over half of Americans say they would be somewhat/very comfortable using a gender-neutral pronoun to refer to someone, and just under half would be somewhat or very uncomfortable doing so.

Canadian Project Demonstrates Reduced Wait Times for Mental Health and Addiction Services

The Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC), the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, and Memorial University launched a report outlining the tremendous success of a new way to improve access to mental health services. *Stepped Care 2.0 E-Mental Health Demonstration Project* details the outcomes of an 18-month project designed to provide clients with rapid, flexible, same-day care, in combination with e-mental health apps, online self-help services, and behavioral prescriptions. This project helped reduce wait times in mental health and addiction counseling services by 68 percent. Clients rated 67 percent of the e-mental health tools as “good” or “excellent,” while providers reported a significantly increased comfort level with incorporating these technologies into their conventional practice. The tenets of the program, which include e-mental health, recovery principles, and rapid access to single session counseling, show promise as a solution to stagnant waitlists and overloaded crisis care. The lessons learned from the report are being shared with provincial and national decision makers, as well as with mental health leaders, as a road map for improved access to mental health care and addiction services, nationally and internationally.

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HR Director, Rescue Mission Alliance, Oxnard, CA

Major Donor Representative, Union Rescue Mission, Los Angeles, CA

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Major Gift Officer, Lighthouse Mission Ministries, Bellingham, WA

Major Gifts Officer, Union Rescue Mission, Wichita, KS

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Vice President of Development, Career Cross Training, Colorado Springs, CO

Vocational Training Manager, Shreveport-Bossier Rescue Mission, Shreveport, LA



Majestic

*O LORD, our Lord,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!
You have set your glory above the heavens.*
Psalm 8:1, ESV

This psalm was written as a song to be sung by God's people. Imagine, if you will, living in a day before electricity as those who originally sang this verse did. Picture stretching out underneath a canopy of suspended lights at nighttime. The stars would have been breathtaking, overwhelming your eyes by their sheer number and collective intensity.

Most of us rarely have the opportunity to see the "heavens" outside of our modern city lights. But each night, David and the other psalmists would have the heavens open to them in unadulterated glory.

They were well acquainted with the sky's beauty, both the luminescent stars by night and the blazing sun by day, and yet, it was still written that God had set His glory "above" these astonishing heavens. As marvelous as a brilliant sky of stars is, more marvelous still is their Maker.

But how did David begin this song? "O LORD, our Lord." He is ours; our God, our Lord, and the One who will welcome us home. It is one thing to appreciate and behold beauty from afar, but another matter entirely for it to be yours. Never distance yourself from Him who would have you draw near.

We were made His, and He has made Himself ours. Don't squander opportunities to draw close to His majesty.



To contribute: If you would like to write a devotional thought for StreetLight, please make it about 200 words and include at least one Bible verse or passage, and submit via email.

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