



New Church Ministry

# Sparks

Igniting the passion to start new Disciples churches

## Finding a place to call home

Juan Carlos Rodriguez and Guliana Paucar are a unique couple on fire for the Lord. Their life's experiences cross several cultural boundaries and are mixed with struggles and blessings. It is through these experiences that they have witnessed the power of God at work in their lives.

Rodriguez is originally from Venezuela and Paucar is from Peru. They met in Montreal, Quebec, Canada at



Metropolitan Christian Church. They married and then Rodriguez felt a call to move to Calgary. The church in Montreal had a vision of planting churches in other provinces.

*Juan Carlos Rodriguez and Guliana Paucar* It was during a vacation to Calgary that Rodriguez felt a tug on his heart from God. "God said come here with your family," he said. "God wanted me to come to Calgary, Alberta to plant a new church."

Upon returning to Montreal, Rodriguez spoke to his pastor and told him about his experience. "It is my opportunity to work for the kingdom of God," he said. Rodriguez also told his wife of his call. However, Paucar said "that is nice but God hasn't told me this."

Meanwhile, Paucar attended a soccer game where she experienced a chance encounter that changed her life forever. She feels she met a prophet. A man who did not know her, sat beside her at the game and struck up a conversation with her. He told her that he wanted to pray for her. She welcomed his kindness. He prayed for her and told her that she was going to travel and specifically go to Calgary. Overwhelmed by this encounter, she knew that this was her confirmation.

The couple contacted a family that lived in Montreal and asked if they could stay with them for awhile. The family agreed. After moving into their relative's home they noticed that the space was a bit cramped. Two weeks

later, the host family asked them to move out. They were told on a Saturday and by the following Tuesday, they had removed their things from the house and were packed up in a car looking for somewhere to call home. Paucar admits that when she found out that they would have to move she became worried. But she decided to pray to God for a house. Rodriguez, on the other hand, said he wasn't worried. "Why worry when you can pray," he said.

But there was one additional problem. Rodriguez did not have a job. And not being from that area he was having a problem making connections to find employment.

With no job, no house and on a journey to an unknown place to call home, God provided. They happened upon a Hispanic community, who embraced them. Rodriguez found a job and a house for his family. Paucar also said that she was praying for a bed for her children. A Christian neighbor invited them to her house and gave them two mattresses and a sofa. "Little by little, God provided everything for us," said Paucar. Family and friends from Montreal also sent them money to help pay some of the bills. "We know that we trust God completely," she said. "He will be there always."

At the couple's new home they invited people from the neighborhood to join them for fellowship. They now

have a 30-member church called Happy Family Christian Church, which meets in their home. The name Happy Family came from the experiences and challenges they faced to



develop a happy family. "God gave us a vision to restore Christian families, to restore teenagers, and to restore life," said Paucar. "We know that God can do it because if He did it for us, He can do it for anybody."

# Milele and James Hobbs preach hope to those with addictions

It started out as a recovery program to assist individuals suffering from a variety of addictions; however, the need for spiritual guidance was strong for individuals after they completed the program.

“We have been doing this program for about three years and as people in the group have been healed and saved they needed a place to worship,” said Milele Hobbs. As a result of seeing a need for something more, the Hobbs created a church, called Trees of Righteousness Christian Church, in Portland, Oregon, which started in April 2007.

In August of this year, the Hobbs added a transitional living house, which includes three sleeping areas on the upper level, a basement, a main level and a loft area. “We consider the house an extension of our ministry,” said James Hobbs.

James and Milele have experiences in their life that brought them to this juncture. They are both recovering addicts. “God pulled us out of addictions,” said James. “I did more than 10 years in a penitentiary,” he said. “The main reason that I was in that situation was because of my addiction. But God healed me. He gave me a hunger and a thirst to reach the ones that are in the same situation—the same predicaments. And I know that God confirmed in me that if you can do it for a chief sinner like me (someone considered a menace to society), then there is hope for my sisters and brothers.”

Milele worked for the State of California in the Welfare Department as a social worker. She worked her

way to the head of the department. During this time “I was a high functioning addict,” she said. “In 1984, I was delivered from a \$200 a day cocaine



*James and Milele Hobbs*

snorting habit.” Milele recounts that she thought that she had the best of everything, the large home and highly respected job. However, things were not together on the inside. “I had all of those hurts that I was nursing,” said Milele. “And even when God delivered me from drugs, I became a shopping addict,” she said. “And after I could no longer afford (Nordstrom’s), then I became a Goodwill addict,” she said. “The point is not just getting people off of the drugs, off the streets, or out of their crisis, it is how to keep them off,” said James. “You have to stabilize them,” he said. “The gospel that we preach to them, that is their stability. That is what they can anchor onto.”

“If we can help repair and prevent, then we can help challenge people and channel them into their potential—to achieve the plan that God had for them before He formed them in their mother’s womb,” said Milele.



## With your help we are equipping new church planters

A gift to the New Church Ministry Annual Fund helps make it possible for more new church planters to be nurtured and developed. It also allows people seeking God to find a place where they feel comfortable worshipping. New Church Ministry is passionately embracing the Disciples 2020 vision of starting “1,000 new churches in 1,000 ways!”

- Calling
- Equipping
- Empowering

Your gift to the New Church Ministry Annual Fund will make a difference!

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[www.newchurchministry.org](http://www.newchurchministry.org) or call 800.274.1883; en español 866.534.1949. **New Church Ministry**



# Fall Training helps planters discover resources

At the 2008 Fall Training you could witness the excitement yet reservation and unexplainable faith in the new church planters' eyes as they confirmed that God was doing a new thing in their lives. Approximately 60 individuals attended this event, which was held Sept. 7-12. Many traveled long distances, from as far as Calgary, Canada, to participate in this event held at the Fatima Retreat House in Indianapolis. Coaches training kicked off the event on Sunday, Sept. 7. This was for individuals who are a part of the Barnabas program, which provides mentoring and encouragement to the new church planters. New church planters training began Monday, Sept. 8.

Twice each year New Church Ministry presents initial training as a tool to help new church planters understand the many facets of joining the New Church Movement. From developing a mission statement to participating in evening worship service to gathering information on filing taxes, the event had something to offer everyone who attended. "We understand the challenges of being a new church planter," said Rick Morse, vice president of New Church Ministry and Mission Initiatives. "We want to provide the individuals with the needed resources and let them know that we are here to support and encourage them along their journey," he said.



*Guliana Paucar and Louis St. Fort serve communion during worship service.*



*Participants of NCM Fall Training gather outside the Fatima Retreat House.*



*NCM staff pray for new church planters during commissioning service.*



*Rick Morse, Amanda Page, Shelly Clark and Johanna McWhirter of Southport Christian Church's Divine Intervention sing worship and praise songs during evening service.*

## Holly Patton wants to create an authentic church community

Holly Patton has had a few life-changing experiences to get her to the point of planting a church. "I grew up unchurched," said Patton. "And for a long time I had a very bad taste in my mouth about church," she said. "And then



Holly Patton

my life was transformed—by really knowing Christ. I knew God but didn't know Christ for a long time." Though Patton was divorced with two teen-aged sons, she had a good job in pharmaceutical sales. "What really brought me to my calling was a very broken time in my life," she said. "The job was a way to provide financially for my boys and me. Finally I realized that in order to find that fulfillment, I needed to let go of what the world said was successful and trust God." She decided to attend Memphis Theological Seminary. Patton admits for her boys it was a major transition to go from an income to a deficit. "However they soon became very supportive of my choice and they saw the change in my life and in their lives," she said.

Upon graduating from seminary and becoming ordained, Patton pastored First Christian Church in Benton, Ark. for 2 ½ years. "It was a good experience, the church grew but it wasn't a good match for me," said Patton. "An opportunity was suddenly dropped in my lap by God and from some people in the region (Great River) to do a congregational church plant," she said.

While still in discernment about the church name, for now Patton is calling it Our Church, which is located in West Little Rock, Ark. "It is my vision to help people get beyond the concept of a traditional church and to really get to know Christ and the transforming power that one is able to access through Christ," she said.

Approximately 55 people attended the first service held in September. "We are presently meeting in a conference room located in a building next door to a funeral home," said Patton. "It is really remarkable to see how God is working."

The ideal church for Holly Patton would be a very open environment that is filled with God's grace and people that know they need God's grace and are willing to create an authentic community and go out to help build the kingdom of God.



### New Church Ministry

P.O. Box 7030

Indianapolis, IN 46207

800.274.1883

En Español: 866.534.1949

[www.newchurchministry.org](http://www.newchurchministry.org)

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