



New Song News

The Monthly Newsletter for the Staff of New Song Urban Ministries

Volume 5 Number 1

February 2005



New Song's MERRELL JOHNSON at Covenant College!

Okay, so the picture is Merrell Johnson from his days as bass player extraordinaire at New Song Community Church. It's just that our archives don't yet contain an updated photo of him actually at college. But we do have some great news hot off the press, direct from Lookout Mountain, Tennessee, 650 miles from Baltimore, where Merrell was reached on-site at Covenant College earlier this month.

In case you didn't know, this is Merrell's first year (that would mean he's a freshman!) in college after graduating last spring from Mt. St. Joseph High School. Merrell has chosen to major in business at Covenant, where the things he likes the most are "the people, the atmosphere, and the environment. It's easy to get along with everyone here." When asked what he'd say to encourage current Learning Center students, as a graduate of New Song Academy (Class of 2000) himself, Merrell says, "Do what you have to do now and then when you get to high school. It makes it a lot easier on yourself once you get to college." And he adds, "Don't be afraid of

change; it can sometimes be the best thing for you, especially coming out of Sandtown." Merrell says he does miss Sandtown, "especially the people and the ministry," and he would like to thank New Song for everything. In his words, "If it wasn't for New Song, I wouldn't be here today and I wouldn't be the person I am today." The next time we can expect to see Merrell in Sandtown might be for Easter. He hopes to go to Puerto Rico for an intensive Christian counseling course over spring break, March 5-14. He and his mom Janice have raised \$300 of the \$500 needed for the trip. If you'd like to help Merrell get to Puerto Rico, please contact Patty (ppr@nsum.org).

Other Learning Center Grads in College

- *Michael Parker, Coppin State
- *Dacha Anderson, BCCC
- *Jana Goodson, University of Baltimore
- *Antoinette (Annie) Rooks, Coppin State
- *William Scipio, Coppin State
- *Artes (A.J.) Elliott, St. Paul's College (Virginia)
- *Levon Russell, Tuskegee University (Alabama)
- *Tierra Young, Allegheny College

Congratulations to Merrell on a successful transition to college. We miss you here at New Song!

HEALTH ALERT

Dr. Belinda Chen

Partners in Health, Partners in Healing, Partners in Hope

We're excited to introduce New Song's Health Co-operative, a new project of our health ministry that will open its doors in March. Though we are still in the planning stages for the primary care clinic that People's Community Health Center plans to open in our facility, God has nudged us to begin a different, complementary outreach ministry right now.

Every Wednesday evening (beginning in March) from 6-8 PM, the doors at 1300 N. Fulton Avenue will be open to any Sandtown resident desiring support in improving their health and moving towards "shalom – the presence of peace and wholeness and not merely the absence of disease."

Mrs. Rose Brown and Mrs. Sylvia Simmons, both former employees of the health center who have honed and enhanced their skills over the last two years, will form the health cooperative's core staff. "I'm excited to be back in the community and look forward to helping people check their blood sugars, blood pressure, or weight and link them to doctors or other medical people that I know," says Sylvia Simmons, a medical assistant. "I'm ready to help people link up to resources I've learned are out there like help with prescriptions or applying to Medicare's QMBY program," added Rose Brown. In addition, volunteers who are eager to share their time and health expertise in partnership with New Song will work with Rose and Sylvia accepting referrals or coming on-site when necessary.

All those involved are committed to creating a positive place where all that come can leave with hope because of Christ and his love for us and for them.

We are excited to see what God will do through this ministry of neighbors caring for neighbors. All the services of the co-op will be provided free thanks to a grant received from Sandtown Community Building in Partnership and matching monies received from private donations.

Come visit us and pray with and for us as we make ourselves available to our community in faith that God will do great things!

DID YOU KNOW. . .

- ♥ Martha's Place held their 19th graduation for women completing the six month transitional program on January 30th. So far 33 women have graduated from Martha's Place, overcoming their drug addiction and transitioning to independent living back in the community.
- ♥ New Song Preschool is moving into the newly renovated 1385 Gilmore building.
- ♥ Congrats to Pastor Thurman and Ms. Evie who are celebrating FIVE years with New Song!
- ♥ NSUM received the Families Count Award from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, with a financial commitment of \$100,000 per year over the next five years!

Mrs. Amelia Harris joins Weinberg Fellows Class 2005!

The Weinberg Fellows Program is a program for directors of agencies serving disadvantaged residents of Baltimore, providing training in nonprofit management (including strategic planning, financial management and conflict resolution) and the chance to network with other agency and business leaders in the City. Mrs. Harris believes that her participation in the program will be of benefit by networking with others doing similar work, enriching her skills as an executive director and gaining more exposure for Martha's Place. New Song wishes to congratulate Mrs. Harris for receiving this high honor and recognition of the faithful work she has done on behalf of Sandtown residents over the years, especially for the women of Martha's Place.



“Seek the Peace of the Community”

Rev. Thurman Williams

Pastor, New Song Community Church

Jeremiah 29:7 *“Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.”*

The context of the above verse is a letter that the prophet Jeremiah sent to the people of God when they were in exile in Babylon. They were concerned with understanding what their posture should be in the community they were in. The Babylonians wanted them to assimilate, leaving their culture at the door and just blending in with everyone else. The false prophets of Judah, on the other hand, advised them to withdraw from the culture and basically look out for themselves. But God’s prophet, Jeremiah, received different advice from the Lord: “Don’t seek the well-being of yourself individually, and neither seek just the well-being of your people; instead, seek the peace of the whole city.” This was a radical statement – the verse literally says “in their peace is your peace.”

What does this have to do with us? We are faced with similar options in the midst of our community (and the “We” I’m speaking of is the Church, the people of God). We can just assimilate and not live any differently than anyone else around us, or we can take the opposite extreme and withdraw to our own respective “groups” (according to gender, race, background, etc.), only relating to each other on a surface level. Or we can follow God’s alternative and seek the peace of the whole community. The Hebrew word for “peace” is “shalom,” a rich word that signifies wholeness in every area of life (spiritual, physical, emotional, economic, etc.). What does that mean practically? It means we bring every area of our lives and our ministries under the Lordship of Christ, because we realize it’s all his anyway. It means we work for the well-being of the whole community, not just for ourselves individually or for our people group. It means we work for the glory of God, and not for

BOOK REVIEW

By Rev. Mark Gornik

A new and very important book is Charles Marsh's *The Beloved Community: How Faith Shapes Social Justice, from the Civil Rights Movement to Today* (Basic 2005).

The book begins by recounting a 1956 address by Martin Luther King Jr. where he is reflecting on the meaning of the Montgomery bus boycott.

“Although a boycott was necessary in Montgomery to bring an end to discriminatory laws, King urged the church people in the movement to keep in mind that a boycott and its achievements do not in themselves represent the goal. ‘The end is reconciliation, the end is redemption,’ he said, ‘the end is the creation of the beloved community.’”

The “beloved community,” as Marsh argues, is a vision of reconciliation and right relationships. It is a picture of God's kingdom, and when the church enacts it in everyday life, it offers a prophetic witness.

Marsh shows how this Christian conviction was central to the civil rights movement. To tell this story, he turns to Martin Luther King, Clarence Jordan, and John Perkins.

The beloved community continues today, Marsh argues, largely under the radar screen, and through grassroots efforts. In the chapter “Building Beloved Communities: Dispatches from the Quiet Revolution,” Marsh offers New Song as one example of how the vision of Dr. King, Dr. Perkins and many others for the beloved community continues today.

This is an immensely important book in the field of civil rights studies and the relationship of faith to public life. More importantly for New Song, it can help us better understand our history, work and calling. All New Song staff are encouraged to read it. Allan will order copies for anyone interested.

our own or anyone else’s. And it means we find our strength in Christ alone, because nothing else can sustain us for such a great task. May 2005 be a year where God brings more of the peace of the City of God into the community of Sandtown, for his glory.

BEYOND THE RIM, Inc. Middle School Basketball

Our New Song Boys and Girls Middle School Teams have already started playing in the "Beyond the Rim, Inc." League. Here is the schedule for their upcoming games, all held at West Baltimore Middle School:

Boys:

Feb 8 vs. Thurgood Marshall, 5 pm
Feb 10 vs. Ben Franklin, 6 pm
Feb 22 vs. Chinquapin, 6 pm
Mar 1 vs. Garrison, 5 pm
Mar 3 vs. Pimlico, 5 pm
Mar 15 vs. West Baltimore, 5 pm

Girls:

Feb 11 vs. Thurgood Marshall, 5 pm
Feb 16 vs. Ben Franklin, 6 pm
Feb 25 vs. Chinquapin, 6 pm
Mar 4 vs. Garrison, 5 pm
Mar 9 vs. Pimlico, 5 pm
Mar 18 vs. West Baltimore, 5 pm

Tournament April 8-9, Championship April 15

Come out and cheer our teams on.
Go New Song!!!

"Happy Birthday to you, Happy Birthday to you, Happy Birthday dear:"

Dec 14	--Doug Fireside, Learning Center
Dec 23	--Barbara Davidson, Learning Center
Dec 25	--Kathleen Basham, Learning Center
Jan 7	--Barbara Baer, Habitat
Jan 9	--Denise Sample, Habitat
Jan 10	--Alvin Richardson, New Song Arts
Jan 26	--Mary Lee Williams, Learning Center
Jan 30	--Sean Stevenson, Learning Center
Feb 2	--Arny Arnold, New Song Arts
Feb 3	--Jane Johnson, Learning Center
Feb 22	--Roxie Cook, Learning Center
Mar 10	--Patty Prasada-Rao, NSUM
Mar 13	--Emily Maunz Marcus, Learning Center
Mar 14	--Mary Smallman, New Song Church
Mar 18	--Allan Tibbels, NSUM/Habitat
Mar 29	--Elder C.W. Harris, Newborn

"Happy Birthday to you!!!"

(Our sincerest apologies for tardy birthday greetings December through early February. Hope you had very happy celebrations!)

Mark Your Calendars

Feb 18	SANDTOWN performs at Montgomery & Blue Ridge Baptist Association, Student Ministries, Middleton, MD, 7:15 p.m.
Mar 12	Habitat House Dedication with homeowner Doreen Spencer, sponsor Timonium Presbyterian Church, 1805 Presstman, 3 p.m.
Mar 12	Country-Dancing Night at Chapelgate Presbyterian, benefit for New Song, 7-10 p.m.
Mar 17-19	Habitat staff at Urban Affiliates Conference in Washington DC
Mar 25 - Apr 8	Learning Center Spring Break, classes resume on April 11
Mar 26	Easter Egg Hunt at Mr. Kelley's, 3 p.m.
Mar 30 - Apr 3	Cross Culture Spring Tour through the Nashville area
Apr 2	Young Presidents Organization volunteer day with Habitat
Apr 2	SANDTOWN performs for the Virginia Conf. of United Methodists, Norfolk, VA
Apr 16	Martha's Place Graduation (tentative date), 4 p.m.
Apr 23	Cross Culture performs at Concert of Praise with Dr. John Perkins, Rochester, NY
Jun 20-24	Habitat's Annual Summer Building Week

Upcoming Events

Please turn in staff news items and suggestions for *New Song News* to Patty Prasada-Rao, Editor (ppr@nsum.org)