

## *Neighborhood City Church*

December 2007

Dear Partners in Ministry,

He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver..  
Malachi 3:3

The second week of Advent brought me to this passage in Malachi that speaks of the promise fulfilled at that first Christmas when the Messenger of the Covenant, the Lord, was born a little baby in a manger. As I reflect on this promise and the work that is set in motion by the appearing of our Savior Jesus, I get a picture of what God has been doing in our midst this last year and what He will continue to do in the year to come. His careful refining of us as a church is a cause for joy and prayer, which I want to share with you as you pray for us.

The Lord continues to bless our ministry as we seek to reach out to our increasingly diverse population in La Crosse. We continue to see new people each week who are truly impacted by the sharing of testimonies, worship music, preaching of the Word, and the fellowship of the body. There are those who have responded to Jesus and have been rescued from the devastation of addictions and others who have stumbled and created challenges for us in ministering to them. We are seeking to become a more effective place of refuge for Jesus to do His work in lives that have been devastated by drugs, alcohol, sexual sin, broken marriages, abusive relationships, and oppression of racial and social-economic prejudice and injustice. We are seeking to meet the challenge of truly reaching out to our neighbors, the ones who are in need in our city.

This summer our church took the step of hiring two youth interns, Andrew Smalley and Yia Vang. This was a good start in connecting with middle and senior high students. This past fall Andrew went off to college and Yia stayed on. The transition into the school year schedule has been slow but we are having five of our students go to Districts. Please pray that this will be a kick start for the new year.

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On August 11 Block Party 2007 moved back to the roots of Neighborhood City Church by having the outreach in Hood Park. This year we experienced a fuller program and served food to 750 to 800 neighbors. There was a great sense of working together and community. A special blessing was having volunteers from Faith Evangelical Free Church in Minoqua return to help us a second year.

A clear sense of the refining process was evident as our Elder Board worked on the development of our constitution and bylaws. With the diverse backgrounds of our church this task of developing our formal structure has proved to be a challenge. At a meeting on October 21 thirty-eight charter members ratified the new constitution and bylaws. The final step of full membership in the Evangelical Free Church will be taken at the Forest Lakes District Conference in the spring of 2008.

The next step of refining will be our 2008 focus of mobilizing the membership both by increasing membership and developing discipling and ministry opportunities in our transforming community. We are facing the challenge of becoming more than a Sunday morning experience. By building a deeper sense of what it means for us to be committed to one another, we seek to bridge racial, social, and economic barriers both inside and outside of Neighborhood City Church. Please pray that we can be building a deeper sense of community as we mature as a church.

Included in this next step of building community is the search for a building that can be a ministry center for our church family. We also will need to increase our sources of income through giving and other means as we seek to fulfill the mission the Lord has given us. Please be praying that we can find a building in our target neighborhood that we can afford. Over the six years we have been ministering at Neighborhood City Church, God has abundantly supplied financial resources. However, we are facing a new challenge as the ministry grows and expenses increase. Our cash reserves are being used up. Be praying that we can see the increase in giving to meet the shortfall in our budget.

Thanks for your support in prayer and financial gifts. May the Lord have His way in all of us this next year as He applies His refiner's fire in our lives.

In Christ and for His purposes,

Chris and Roxy