



Urban Light Ministries 2020 Strategic Plan



Urban Light Ministries

2020 Strategic Plan

The 2020 Urban Light Ministries Strategic Plan reviews the organization's history and strengths to identify opportunities to further develop a vision and direction. The plan is to identify ways to expand Urban Light Ministries achievement in biblically-based awareness, education, and online services to support the improvement of racial relations, the father's role in the family, the growth of God's love in the hearts of our youth, and strengthening community unity beginning in the church, for the cause of Christ.

History

Urban Light Ministries is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization that was established in 1995. The current mission is increasing the number of responsible fathers, nurtured children and strong families in Jesus' name. The primary programs offered by the organization include community-based and online fatherhood programs such as "POPS 101" and "Father Love" and elementary student ministries – Sonshine Clubs that was started in 1993.

The work of the organization is strongly community-based in the Springfield, Ohio, and the greater Miami Valley area and continues to expand through the use of online resources. From the very beginning, the board, staff and volunteers have been intentionally ethnically diverse as we seek to serve the whole community as representatives of the kingdom of God.



Need

Urban Light Ministries was a pioneer in addressing a growing systemic problem in America: the need for a father in a child's life. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 24 million children in America – one out of three – live without their biological father in the home. Consequently, there is a "father factor" in nearly all of the societal ills facing America today. Research shows when a child is raised in a father-absent home he or she is affected in the following ways: [i]

- 4 times greater risk of poverty
- 7 times more likely to become pregnant as a teen
- More likely to have behavioral problems
- More likely to face abuse and neglect
- 2 time greater risk of infant mortality
- More likely to abuse drugs and alcohol
- 2 times more likely to suffer obesity
- 2 times more likely to drop out of high school
- More likely to commit a crime and go to prison

Urban Light Ministries was established to address this crisis. Research now proves that fatherhood programs, similar to those developed and implemented by Urban Light Ministries, improve outcomes and children: [ii]

- Perform better in school, both academically and socially
- Have higher self esteem and lower rates of depression
- Less likely to display aggressive or hyperactive behaviors
- Less likely to engage in high risk behaviors (e.g., drugs, truancy), and
- Boys are more likely to become responsible fathers themselves

Resource Focus

Through the leadership of founder Eli Williams, Urban Light Ministries has operated The Sonshine Clubs after school ministry since its founding in 1995. Prior to that, The Sonshine Clubs had been organized and managed by Lifeline Ministries, the predecessor organization led by Williams.

In addition, ULM has focused its efforts over the last 14 years in creating and providing effective fatherhood programs and initiatives in the Greater Miami Valley area.

Some of the major initiatives include:

- Established The Sonshine Clubs weekly children's ministry to serve elementary school children of all ethnicities.
- Establishment of SALT Club, a Christian leadership development and community service club in 1998
- Organized the Christian Cross Cultural Fellowship (3CF) to foster biblical Christian harmony among believers in a very diverse ethnically and denominationally diverse small group.
- Opened a resource center on South.. Yellow Spring Street in 1997 to provide local services including a food pantry, a free physicians' ministry, community meals and an "Adopt-a Block" program
- Acquired WBLY 1600 AM in 2002 to reach out to the community through radio. It was sold to Radio Maria in 2007

- Regional programs that have partnered with Urban Light Ministries including Marriage Resource Center (2007), Ohio Practitioners Network for Fathers and Families (2008), Ohio Commission on Fatherhood (2008), Clark County Board of Commissioners (2009), and Montgomery County DJFS Fatherhood Initiative (2010), and Pregnancy Resource Clinic of Clark County,
- Established the award winning Clark County Fatherhood community initiative
- Helped establish the annual My Dad ROCKS annual fatherhood awards in Clark County, Ohio (2010) and Montgomery County (2011), Now named The Clark County Fatherhood Awards in Springfield, it was the cornerstone of our initiative as we assumed leadership role in authoring the Community Fatherhood Policy for Clark County
- Awarded funding through the Ohio Commission on Fatherhood for POPs 101.
- Recognized as a leader in the Fatherhood Clark County community mobilization initiative
- Selected as a primary location for the Fatherhood Clark County Fathers Resource Center
- Established the community-based Father's Day weekend celebration – FatherFest – and coordinated annually since 2010
- Helped publish William's Father Love book in 2016 to provide a biblically-based resource focused on the critical need for biological fathers in a child's life. Completed the companion Study Guide in 2017, and began offering Dad's Discussion Groups to local churches and nonprofits using the materials with a newly created PowerPoint(R) presentation in 2019.



Current Programs

Fatherhood Programs

Urban Light Ministries currently provides resources and training for online and community-based programs that focus on developing tools to create a safe, loving, stable and nurturing family environment. POPS 101 and Father Love face-to-face discussion groups are facilitated by experienced, certified practitioners.

Participants learn how to achieve cooperation and teamwork in family life, proven conflict resolution, and problem-solving strategies, effective family communication techniques to strengthen father-child and father-mother relationships and positive discipline tools.

Free online programs are offered through our website: www.ulmcourses.org. Current online courses include POPS101, English and Spanish versions. The online version of Father Love is still under development.

Fatherhood programs that have been offered in the past include POPS 101, On My Shoulders, Nurturing Fathers for Life (NFL), and Father Love.

Children's Ministry

The Sonshine Club has been providing Bible-based afterschool programs to elementary age children for over a quarter century. The program is a high-energy, fun, attention-grabbing, life-impacting ministry that seeks to engage elementary school-age children. For one hour weekly after school, volunteers bring the message of Jesus Christ through prayer, activities, Bible stories and verses. The program begins with a short prayer, then progresses to a high-energy game or activity. Teachings from the Bible are included as well as a chance to earn special treats and prizes. Children are challenged to learn and recite a memory verse each month.

Due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Sonshine Club program will be offered online through a web-based app that elementary age students can obtain access through via their smartphones. Parent-aiding resources are also available enabling them to provide guidance and support as their child enjoys the Bible-based programming.

Community Unity

Leveraging the experience and the respect our organization's leader has earned in the community, Urban Light Ministries is beginning to build programming, and communications that focuses on the need for local Christians to be engaged in endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph 4:3). The need for this work has become starkly evident due to the very public injustices involving law enforcement and sometimes violent protests demanding change.

A very deep divide within the Christian church in America has been exposed, doing severe damage to the witness of the Church, which has been called by Jesus Christ to be the premier example of brotherly love, unity and peace (John 17:20-26).

This initiative, in its early stages, has already created interest and momentum through participation in the Celebrate Simunye group which seeks racial reconciliation in the church as an example to the community and video based communications highlighting thought leaders in the area of race relations and Christian unity. Williams is in the process of writing a book on the topic. This will become one of the key focuses of Urban Light Ministries moving forward.



Future Direction

Building on Opportunities

Urban Light Ministries has over 25 years of experience developing and implementing programs that meet the needs of fathers and children. A SWOT analysis has determined ways to use the strengths built over the years to address the new opportunities associated with reaching our targeted audiences.

SWOT Analysis

The SWOT analysis revealed that the need for fatherhood programs addressing the absence of fathers in the family and training fathers to be better role models is more critical now than it was when Urban Light Ministries began.

One of the newest opportunities is the use of digital media to reach the target audience. Technology, through online training, smartphone apps, and social media awareness, has opened the channels for communicating with this market. Urban Light Ministries strengths in program development and broadcasting positions it to use the latest technology to enhance its program reach.

This change to move more communications through these new online channels will better leverage the financial and people resources to reach a larger audience. Weaknesses, including lack of funding and volunteers, can be minimized through better leveraging current resources and proving to potential funders that we have improved program that not only can be but is more impactful for more fathers and families.

Also, the increased visibility and public response to systemic racism, injustice and ethnic disparities provides a fresh opportunity to focus resources in these important areas. The church has been called by Almighty God to

“walk worthy of the calling with which you were called.” (Eph 4:1.) We are called to a multifaceted role that only His church can fulfill.

He has called us to preach the gospel and make disciples of all people. We have also been called to be ambassadors for Christ to be the light of the world and the salt of the earth. This further calls us to the ministry of reconciliation. The world is desperate for a sustainable model of brotherly love, unity, peace, equality, equity, justice and harmony... shalom. Jesus said to His followers: “By this all will know that you are my disciples if you have love one for another (John 13:35.)

Christ followers need practical training and regular

opportunities for building cross-cultural relationships. Successful outcomes will include increased love and understanding. This will result in more multi-ethnic fellowship and less ethnic division within the local body of Christ, resulting in a powerful witness to the community.



Most Christian congregations are mostly segregated, and most members like it that way. A LifeWay Research study found two-thirds of American churchgoers felt their church had done enough to become diverse. See: <https://lifewayresearch.com/2018/03/20/protestant-pastors-want-churches-to-be-diverse-see-slow-progress/>

As a consequence, as Rev. Dr. ML King lamented more than 50 years ago, “11:00 on Sunday morning is America’s most segregated hour.” This lack of cross-cultural relationship building has resulted in a deep political divide among Christ followers. More than half (57 percent) of Protestant churchgoers under 50 say they prefer to go to church with people who share their political views. And few adult Protestant churchgoers say they attend services with people of a different political persuasion.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths:

- Founder has 35+ years of active community involvement and leadership
- ULM has over 26 years of successful programs catered to local elementary school students (Sonshine Clubs) and Healthy Fathering Skills
- Biblically-based curriculum documented with proven results
- Published fatherhood book, "Father Love" which validates programs and builds thoughtful leadership in the space
- Member of Celebrate Simunye, a clergy and Christian leader group working towards biblical unity
- Growing number of active community supporters and donors

Weaknesses:

- Lack of adequate funding and government grant availability due to insistence on Biblically-based programming
- Challenges in recruitment of volunteers
- Inconsistent donor management strategy and marketing plans
- Outreach currently based solely on local funding and donors
- Lack of capacity to provide comprehensive fatherhood programming for struggling fathers

Opportunities:

- The growing need for fatherhood programs and children's biblically based programming
- Demand and adherence to online programming that dramatically expands outreach potential
- The resurgence of racial tensions highlighting the need for Christian brotherhood
- Growing recognition of the need for practical measures for building community among diverse Christians
- The expanding opportunity of crowd funding and online fundraising campaigns
- Google ad grant program that provides \$10,000 of monthly Google ads

Threats:

- Increased competition for donor's time and resources
- Decline in demand for face-to-face training
- Decline in volunteer's time
- Continued turmoil displayed by racial concerns and political unrest

Those are among the findings in a new report on church-going and politics, conducted Aug. 22–30, 2017, by LifeWay Research.

Read more here: <https://www.baptistpress.com/resource-library/news/political-divides-in-church-focus-of-new-study/>

Since there is such political polarization within the community's congregations, a forum for cross-cultural fellowship, multi-ethnic relationship building, and training needs to be created. Urban Light is well positioned to



SPRINGFIELD WORKSPACES

Eli Williams, president and chief executive officer of Urban Light Ministries and owner of EWilliamsCommunications.

Describe your organization: Urban Light is a locally-based nonprofit Christian organization. Our main programs are: The Sometime Clubs children's after-school program, and Fatherhood Programs. EWilliamsCommunications is a publisher and broadcast program producer. I am author of "Father Love - The Powerful Resource Every Child Needs," and writer/host/producer of Hot Gospel 2.0, a weekly music countdown show.

When organization was founded: We incorporated in 1993 as Urban Light Ministries, Inc. EWC was founded in the early 2000s.

How did it get started? When I accepted my calling into the ministry in 1985, I resigned my position as a radio station morning DJ and started a Sunday morning Christian music show called LifeSong. My wife and I were called to expand our Christian ministry beyond the church walls. We started as Lifeline Ministries, doing DJ ministry, jail and prison preaching, children's work, a food pantry, free meals, a free medical clinic and other outreaches.

How many employees? We currently have three employees and dozens of volunteers.

How has your organization grown? ULM has had periods of strong growth, and periods of right-sizing. Growth has come from seeing and meeting needs. Hot Gospel 2.0 has been slowly and steadily growing in the number of stations airing the program. That has happened as people and stations discover us.

Describe your job: Visionary/leader, writer, producer, spokesperson/announcer, men's session facilitator, chief executive, fundraising, etc.

Tell us about what you use to do your job: ULM Office equipment including laptop computer, software and printer, EWC Laptop, audio editing software and studio equipment including professional microphone.

What's unique about your workspace? I have two workspaces. My office at ULM and my office/studio at home for writing and broadcast production.

What is one thing in your space/on your desk that you can't work without? Laptop

What is your secret to success? Persistence, resilience, a sense of calling.

BY DIANE ERWIN, CHAIRMAN/VICE PRESIDENT PHOTO BY KALL LADNER, CHIEF

Springfield News-Times | Saturday, July 15, 2018

LOCAL & STATE

OUR COMMUNITY LOCAL FOCUS HIGHLIGHTS AREA NEWS, EVENTS & MORE

Men honored for commitment to fatherhood, community

Urban Light Ministries honored 16 men for their commitment to fatherhood and community service at a ceremony on Saturday, June 16, at the Springfield Convention Center. The award winners were recognized for their dedication to their families, the community, and their faith. The ceremony was held at the Springfield Convention Center, where the award winners were recognized for their dedication to their families, the community, and their faith. The ceremony was held at the Springfield Convention Center, where the award winners were recognized for their dedication to their families, the community, and their faith.



Shows are 16 of the 25 Community Fatherhood Award winners honored at a ceremony June 16 at the Convention Center. (Photo by [Name])

Fathers

Lynnwood News-Press

Storyline of Northridge Pastor Neil Bandy, one of the award winners, spoke of fatherhood's importance. "Being a father has been the greatest privilege of my life," he said. "Besides my own children, I have lots of spiritual children I have adopted and I have grown very close to. I think it is important to be a father to as many children as you can." Bandy was honored for his dedication to his family and the community.

"The aim of the award is to recognize fathers who play a vital role in the lives of their children," he said. "Even a man with no biological children can be a great father."

James Wallace played fatherhood just below his wife with God. "I've got three beautiful children and being a father has probably been No. 1 in my life," said Wallace. "Well, Christ Jesus is obviously No. 1. But I do in being a father. When you understand the importance of being a good father and seeing people, from your own to all those across. There you are a father to all people."

Joe Deven Oshlow is an example of a father. "My dad was a part time dad and now that I am a father, I see that being a part-time dad doesn't cut it," he said. "All the programs I've gone through at Urban Light, from the Fatherhood Club to the fatherhood training, help me be a better dad. And the direction of the Lord, of course. It has good to be a parent."

"Recognition should increase the awareness of a great responsibility, and award winner Charles Michael Ambrose, said. "Fatherhood is a huge responsibility," said Ambrose. "I look at it as a huge responsibility. Taking care of the kids and the wife, it's a responsibility to see a kid."

"What do you say to a father who is thinking about getting his relationship with his children?" "First of all, just hang in there," said Ambrose. "Find a man of people who can support you and continue to love all you can. There find a good role model."

"I'm just trying to emulate our Father God, trying to be loving and compassionate," said award winner Steve White. "We have a good model and try to follow him as best as we can. Thank God we are forgiven when we mess up."



organize such a ministry.

Strategic Direction

The future direction of Urban Light Ministries will leverage its long heritage of providing support and education to local fathers and elementary students to expand this learning through new channels of distributions to increase the impact far beyond the local Springfield Ohio area.

Mission

The mission of Urban Light Ministries will remain consistent to the values and purpose established over 25 years ago and be based to Biblical truths:

Turning the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to the Heavenly Father, while endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Biblical cornerstones:
Malachi 4:6; Ephesians 4:3

Vision

A new vision will be created to better focus resources and program initiatives toward reaching a larger audience outside the local community service area. The view of Urban Light Ministries within five years will be as follows:

“Urban Light Ministries is an organization with the technological, financial and human resources to lead the effort of working for the unity of Christ followers for the purpose of having a positive impact on the families and communities it serves for the glory of God.”

The future vision is to translate resources to other languages.

Objectives

Urban Light Ministries will focus its resources on three primary objectives over the next five years.

1. Establish a Christian unity brand to build programs and communication vehicles to impact over 1 million fathers and community members for Christ.
2. Build programs and communication vehicles to impact over 1 million elementary students and children with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
3. Become a thought leading resource for information and facilitation concerning racism in the church and that drives the messages of brotherly love, unity and peace.

Strategies

Objective 1: Establish a unified fatherhood brand to build programs and communication vehicles to reach over 1 million fathers, incorporating Christian unity messages throughout

Strategy 1.1 – Bring all current fatherhood programs and resources under one brand name (TBD) leveraging the “Father Love” program and book developed by Rev. Eli Williams and use as a platform for all future Fatherhood programs. Build the curriculum and study guide for online training execution and integrate the other Fatherhood Program curriculums into one cohesive deliverable.

Strategy 1.2 – Build a network of fathers and father figures for mutual support, skill building, and family strengthening through providing a Fatherhood Toolkit using an online community, social media and blogging to improve the awareness and importance of fatherhood issues and teachings.

Strategy 1.3 – Develop and implement the Fatherhood Toolkit through a Church-based video group learning program to foster action by local church congregations within their own communities.

Strategy 1.4 – Continue working and building partnerships with local outreach programs that connect with fathers and new mothers to continue building strong curriculums, outreach programs and resources.

Objective 2: Develop the “Sonny” character and build online programs and communication vehicles to reach over 1 million elementary students, incorporating Christian unity teaching

Strategy 2.1 – Leverage the Sonshine Club program curriculum and publish a marketable curriculum that can be sold to churches and other Christian organizations.

Strategy 2.2 – Build an online community through a specific “Sonshine Club” focused website and social media to resource, encourage and strengthen families

Strategy 2.3 – Develop a smart phone app for elementary students that incorporates the Biblical teachings and education through storytelling and active decision making.

Show outcomes of good and bad decisions.

Strategy 2.4 – Leverage Sonshine Club program curriculum and build online resources for parents of young children

Objective 3: Become a thought leading resource for information and facilitation concerning racism in the church and that drives the messages of brotherly love, unity and peace.

Strategy 3.1: Leverage the work done locally to facilitate discussion groups on the topics of improving race relations and building unity within the church

Strategy 3.2: Provide resources to educate the different outlooks and positions on racism that help facilitate productive discussions and understanding.