

A photograph of a paved road stretching into the distance, flanked by trees. Sunlight filters through the trees, creating a bright path on the road.

# THE ROCK JOURNAL

FEBRUARY 2014

## NORTH HOUSE: WORKING OUT PERSONAL TESTIMONIES

By Peter Welle

Sharing your testimony sounds easy enough. It's your own story, right? You're supposedly the expert. However, many of us have had the experience of botching the delivery of our own faith story.

We accidentally drop key details, or we find ourselves twenty minutes down some dead-end tangent about the time we broke our arm skateboarding in 8<sup>th</sup> grade. In the end, the person we're sharing with is left listening to a well-intentioned but meandering Christian testimony that is sadly much less impactful than it ought to have been.

The North House has placed a big emphasis this year on crafting winning, effective testimonies. Our small groups challenged each of its members to write out their faith story in 700-800 words. The assigned length allowed us to share the key details of our lives while forcing us to keep it impactful and thematically coherent. We then spent much of the first half of the year working through each member's testimony. The experience was bonding and refreshing; our small group meetings felt like an honest, meaningful writer's workshop.

Everyone got to hear feedback on the unique themes of their own testimony and supportive suggestions on how it could be refined to more effectively incorporate the Gospel message. This process stretched all of us in different ways. We had to be open and vulnerable, we were intellectually engaged, and most importantly, we were all being pushed to share the story of what Jesus Christ has done in our lives.

The big question for the second half of the North House small group is "what next?" With our testimonies now in hand (and in mind) we are reading a book titled *Adventures of a Chicken Evangelist* and encouraging each other toward greater boldness in talking with friends, acquaintances and strangers about God and their beliefs.

The work we've done to this point has bonded us with our brothers and sisters and equipped us to be winsome messengers when God places opportunities in front of us. As a result, those people we're able to connect with will hear more about God's saving power and less about our middle school mishaps.

## INTRODUCING THE ROCK JOURNAL

By Karl Quickert

Proverbs 15:30 says "Good reports give happiness and health." In a world filled with so much bad news, it's refreshing to read about some good news. God is at work at The Rock, and we wanted to report that news to the entire church.

This month you'll be hearing a report from each of our six house churches. Our house churches are sub-communities of The Rock designed to help you grow in your faith and be involved in the lives of other Christians. God is also using our house churches to sow the Gospel in many unique and exciting ways.

We're very excited to publish our very first Rock newsletter and pass along these encouraging reports to all of you. Expect to see *The Rock Journal* published three times a year, and tell us what you think!



## ST. PAUL: ZOO BOO MOBILIZES KIDS TO SOW GOSPEL

*We are home growing missionaries right inside of our families of the St. Paul House Church*

By Ryan Stahl

The Saint Paul House is always looking for new and exciting ways to outreach. With the dynamic of our group (i.e. lots of kids), we strive to have our children involved, engaged and excited to do their part. This fall we found a great opportunity!

During the Fall/Halloween season, Como Zoo has an event called Zoo Boo. This is an event where parents bring their costume-clad kids to the zoo, for a trip around to see animals, collect candy and gifts from vendors inside, all without the scares. With this

context our team came up with a great plan. Since this event is in late October and Halloween themed, we decided to hand out hot drinks (hot chocolate & tea) and candy packs.

To prepare for the event we borrowed the drink containers from The Rock and pre-filled them with hot water. We also ordered some small treat bags, purchased candy and pre-packed them for the event. We inserted the candy along with Rock cards and a Gospel tract in each candy pack and sealed them with a twist-tie. We also had three yard signs printed: the first one said Thirst Station Ahead, the second said Free Hot Chocolate (no strings attached), the last sign said Free

Hot Tea (strings attached). The idea was to place these signs along the path that people would travel to get to the entrance to Zoo Boo, coming to our table before they got there.

So the day came, and we all arrived at the park. We had a team of 11 adults and 15 kids participate in the outreach. The Lord blessed our efforts, and we ended up finding the perfect spot, right where the parking shuttle bus dropped off the visitors. We were able to hand out 200 cups of hot cocoa and 600 candy packs with The Rock cards/Gospel tract – all in less than an hour!

## FULTON HOUSE: REACHING NEW CAMPUSES IN ST. PAUL

*One of the goals of The Rock is to plant new house churches in order to reach new groups of people. That's exactly what's happening with our newest house church—the Fulton House.*

By Corey Kranz and Micah Darling

This fall we started a new house church in the St. Paul area. Since there was already a St. Paul House and an East House, we decided to name it after the street where it was located. Hence, the Fulton House was born.

The Fulton House was birthed by the Minneapolis and Bloomington house churches. Dear people from both house churches joined together with a focus of reaching students at St. Paul colleges like the University of St. Thomas and University of St. Catherine.

Our heart is to reach students on these campuses with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. College years were formative years for us and for many other students. It's a time where many choices are presented and decisions are made about one's future. We feel there is real need in this city and on these

campuses to engage students at such a formative point in their lives.

Since kicking things off this fall, we've had uncanny challenges with the weather. The day of our first planned outreach the heat index reached 105 degrees. After rescheduling it, the weather made a drastic turn to the low 40's with wind and rain. After record cold weather this winter we decided it was best to go with the flow, so we're planning an outreach with boot hockey and hot chocolate.

After seeking counsel from our leaders and other evangelical organizations on these campuses, we're working on getting official student groups established at these colleges. Our team has a number of St. Kate's students so we're aiming there first. After establishing ourselves as an official student group, we will be better able to advertise our events, Bible studies, and house church meetings.

We invite you to pray with us that God will use our group in profound ways!

## MINNEAPOLIS HOUSE: IN A SHOE BOX

*The Minneapolis House has come up with creative and meaningful ways to both impact this world through kindness as well as bring together college students and young families together in community.*

By Katie Lynch

More often than not, you buy a pair of shoes and toss the box. For creative folks, perhaps you use it for your child's caterpillar catch or photo storage. Who would have surmised a shoebox could be a mode of transportation to share the Gospel? Yet, that is exactly what the Rock's Minneapolis House did Christmas of 2013 with Operation Christmas Child.

Approximately five married couples, 15 children and a handful of young adults teamed together to fill 30 shoeboxes with soap, toothbrushes, underwear, candy, toys and many other gifts to impoverished children all over the world.

Along with the goodies, Rockers sent a photo, letter and contact information should the receiver ever decide to be in-touch. This simple act of kindness served as a way to bless underprivileged children, love the lost and share the Gospel; it was also a unique way the church could build community.

Our service did not end there. The Minneapolis House also asked if anyone knew a person or family who needed help that holiday season. There was a taker! A student had been to the home of a young refugee family from Thailand who didn't have much furniture.

"It's really weird to spend time in a house that has no furniture," the student said. "I noticed it was something they needed."

Once again the believers teamed together to provide any household items they had to offer. A dresser, an end table, a kid's kitchen play set, storage bins, toys and a lamp were some of the items the believers delivered to this young couple and their three-year-old son.

Being more difficult, at times, for people to donate time than material things, it was a sincere blessing people were able to dedicate their time to deliver the furniture, making this family's house look like a home. The couple really appreciated the kindness; even the three-year-old was delighted at the new furniture being moved into his home.

"In a nutshell" is an expression meaning the basics of something broken down and made easy; well, "In a Shoe Box" is a similar expression of how easy it can be to get out and sow the Gospel.

The compassion projects achieved by the Minneapolis House was, "in a nutshell," an easy way of sowing the Gospel while being the hands and feet of Jesus and building community. More compassion and outreach projects are soon to come.



## WHAT IS ROCK LIBERATED?



By Karl Quickert

In January, the Minneapolis House launched a new outreach called "Rock Liberated" (rockliberated.com). The purpose is to publish each person's personal testimony online and showcase how God has liberated each person from sin, selfishness, addiction, loneliness and enslavement to this world. They've also had their testimonies printed in order to pass out to friends, family, and strangers.

After just a couple of weeks of being live, the results have been exciting. There have been over 900 unique visitors and over 6000 pages view, with the average person spending approximately five minutes on the site. For a website that's just been launched with virtually no advertising other than personal posts on Facebook, that is a phenomenal start.

In the future, the vision is to allow for other Rockers and possibly even other saints around the country to publish their personal testimonies online. In addition, there are plans to add video testimonies.

Psalm 96:2-3 is a fitting verse to summarize the effect of this new website: "Sing to the Lord; praise his name. Each day proclaim the good news that he saves. Publish his glorious deeds among the nations. Tell everyone about the amazing things he does."



# BLOOMINGTON HOUSE: BERLIN MISSION TRIP 2013

*Short-term mission trips, especially those that emphasize evangelism, are one of the quickest ways to grow in your faith. Most of us do not spend a significant amount of time engaging in spiritual discussions, but on mission trips that's primarily what you're doing. You must depend on God to speak through you, to speak to another person's heart, and to come through on simple details like a passport.*

By Carrie Van Houten

One week before leaving for Berlin I had a mix of so many emotions it was difficult to sort through them at times. I was nervous and anxious and scared, but mostly excited. My passport hadn't arrived yet. The mission trip hadn't even started and I was already learning to trust in the Lord. I prayed multiple times a day that my passport

would arrive in time. I meditated on Psalm 56:3 - "When I am afraid, I put my trust in you." Finally, the day before we left it arrived!

Each day I started out reading God's word in order to be prepared to face the unforeseen challenges that lied ahead. It made me feel confident about my faith and ready to share it with whomever I may talk to that day. Before doing outreaches at Lake Calhoun and in Berlin I thought time would drag and people would be rude, but my experience was very opposite of that. Most who stopped and talked were very open to hear what I had to say. The minutes never felt like hours. In fact, at times the hours felt like minutes!

I was also thankful that I had 12 other Christian friends by my side through this experience. Without their daily support it would be easy to not share my faith, or even worse, to be convinced that what we believe isn't the truth. When I think of my friends on this trip, I think of Proverbs 13:20 where it says "Walk with the wise and become wise, for the companion of fools suffers harm."

Going on the mission trip to Berlin was a life-changing event for me. I learned to trust in the Lord, the importance of starting each day in the word, and the significance of surrounding myself with Christian brothers and sisters.

## EAST HOUSE: ONE STUDENT'S EXPERIENCE IN AN AMERICAN FAMILY

By Jim Schofield

Recently, we hosted a student from Taiwan named Harris. During that week, he became like part of our family. We helped him get situated, find a phone, and we invited him to the East House. When it came time for him to move out, he said he couldn't believe that a family that didn't know him would do so much for him.

He's been coming to the East House and The Rock nearly every week. While at The Rock he received a One Year Bible and a journal and has been reading every day. He told me that he can tell there's something real about the Bible, and he believes it is true. He seems to be impressed by the fact that we don't just hold to a philosophy in our church, but we live out our faith with action.

Here is a short Q&A with Harris:

*Q. What is your spiritual background?*

I didn't have any spiritual background before I came to Minnesota. Also, my family doesn't have any spiritual background. We believed people decided their own fate, and that was it.

*Q. What led you to the University of Minnesota? What led you to The Rock?*

I decided to study abroad. My top priority for studying abroad was a university in America. I am obsessed with the idea pursuing knowledge.

I visited the East House and The Rock because of Jim Schofield, my best friend in Minnesota. He introduced me to the East House and The Rock under no any pressure. Furthermore, he and his wife, Christine both are decent, respectable, and righteous. They help me a lot and let me know exactly about the Bible and Christianity.

*Q. How has your experience at The Rock changed your idea of Christianity?*



*Harris and Josiah Schofield*

I really like The Rock. It breaks my stereotype about Church and Christianity. In my stereotype, the Church always played boring music like a lullaby, and people in the Church are senior citizens. Going to The Rock and the East House has changed my mind. Now, I know if I become a Christian, I will know that Jesus is real and is in our hearts.