

Next two weekends to remind us what God is calling us to do while we are in this great city of Chicago

We do this several times a year, BECAUSE it is easy to forget why God has placed us here AT THIS TIME

Chuck Wahtola is lucky to be alive.

The 67-year-old went fishing at Diversey Harbor Wednesday afternoon. For the first time he didn't take his wife with him.

Around 3:45 p.m. he tried to get up from his folding chair on the dock when it slipped out from beneath him. He fell into the 33 degree water.

He screamed for help and an off duty Chicago firefighter happened to be nearby.

Billy Miller went into rescue mode. Miller held Wahtola tight next to the dock trying to keep him afloat and alert while he called fellow firefighters at the station. Miller then called 911.

Crews arrived and divers helped hoist Wahtola out of the water.

The retired engineer originally from Joliet is going to be fine and is thanking his lucky stars tonight, he says, that Miller was around to save his life.

Rosa Parks - December 1, 1955 in Montgomery, Alabama, Parks refused to obey bus driver James Blake's order that she give up her seat to make room for a white passenger. Physically tired, but no more than you or I after a long day's work. In fact, under other circumstances, she would have probably given up her seat willingly to a child or elderly person. But this time Parks was tired of the treatment she and other African Americans received every day of their lives, what with the racism, segregation, and Jim Crow laws of the time. **"Our mistreatment was just not right, and I was tired of it". "I kept thinking about my mother and my grandparents, and how strong they were. I knew there was a possibility of being mistreated, but an opportunity was being given to me . . . "**

FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS

BLUE #410 ---- WHITE #353

THE PLAYERS

XERXES – King of Persian Kingdom

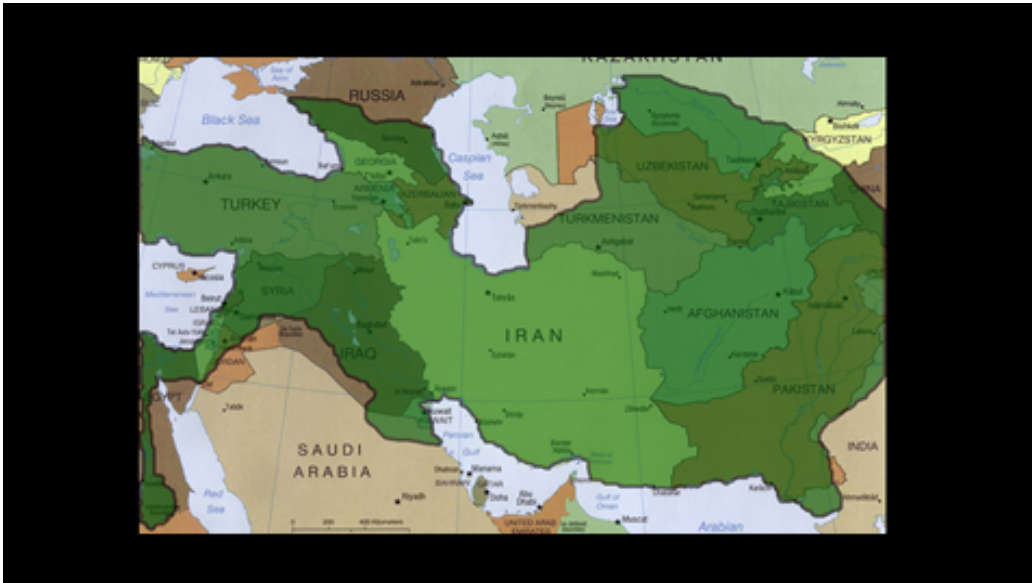
VASHTI – Queen/Wife of Xerxes

YEAH! **ESTHER** – Orphaned Jew taken in by Mordecai (her uncle) became queen

MORDECAI – Esther's Uncle, from the tribe of Kish

BOO **HAMAN** – seeking to destroy not just Mordecai but all the Jews





The dignitary approaching the king is the commander and prime minister of the Medes. He is raising one hand to his mouth as a token of respect and honor.

Darius the Great, the father of Xerxes, is seated on his throne in his reception chamber. He is holding his scepter of authority in his right hand and a budding flower in his left. Behind Darius stands the crown-prince Xerxes.

Outline

- 1 – King throws a party – Queen Vashti refuses to show herself and loses her place – need for new queen
- 2 – Search for new queen – form and feature
 - Beginning of God's providence – granted Esther Favor
 - with Hegai – head of harem
 - with Xerxes the king
 - Esther does not reveal her nationality because Mordecai ordered her not to
 - Mordecai uncovers plot of rebellion and tells Esther who tells the king - They were impaled not hung
- 3 – Haman the Agagite (Amalekite) raised to highest position
 - Mordecai will not bow down to him

4

- vs. 6 Haman learned Mordecai was a Jew and sought to destroy them all
- Haman lies to the king and offers to pay for the genocide of the Jews
- King agrees and edict is sent out

4 – Mordecai finds out – sackcloth and ashes – wailing outside of Kings gate

- Mordecai challenges Esther
- Esther responds fearfully first
- Mordecai challenges her again - tougher
- Esther responds in faith vs. 12 – 16
- Tells Mordecai to fast with the other Jews to pray for her

5 – Esther goes before the king & she finds favor in his eyes – he extends scepter

- Esther throws a banquet invites King and Haman
- Mordecai will not bow to Haman as he leaves palace
- Haman boasts and plots – builds gallows to hang Mordecai

6 – King cannot sleep and reads the chronicles of his kingdom

- Mordecai honored by king for revealing the plot – Haman has to be the one who honors him
- 13b foretelling/developing picture – Haman cannot stand against Mordecai because he is Jewish

7 – Second Banquet is thrown for King and Haman - Esther explains to the king Haman's plot

- Haman is accused and hung

8 – New edict is written to allow the Jews to defend themselves

Other nations see God's protection – creates fear – convert to Judaism

9 – Jews triumph – Purim established

10 – Reminder of the history of Xerxes and Mordecai who is now honored in the kingdom as Prime Minister

APPLICATION

GOD'S PROVIDENCE

Theological truth – God providence

It just so happened . . .

- The presence of God is implied and understood throughout the story, so that the mounting coincidences are but the by-product of His rule over history and his providential care for his people. It is an extraordinary piece of literary genius that this author wrote a book that is about the actions and rule of God from beginning to end, and yet that God is not named on a single page of the story.
- God is the main character, yet he is never mentioned
- He writes the script, produces and directs this story

Working definition of Providence: God is still in control in directing His redemptive plan for His people in order to show His glory - God has it all under control.

The providence of God encompasses two main motifs

- 1 - His provision for his creation and creatures
- 2 - His control over all events and creatures (including His guidance of them).

God's providential governing of all things is only dependent on his own sovereign, free, and infallible will.

- There are no coincidences in God's Kingdom – God acts in such a way that He will be glorified.

Wealth, race, circumstances, smarts, body type, athletic ability all fall under God's PROVIDENCE. Lives that are easy and lives that are hard all fall under God's PROVIDENCE. God gives to some what He withholds from others.

If God was not good and gracious to us we would want to yell at the top of our lungs GOD IS UNFAIR.

All we have – anything good – is a result of God's goodness. We deserve nothing. We are not God's equal that we might reason with him.

The BIBLE is full of the PROVIDENCE OF GOD

Pick a story and try not to find God's finger prints all over the details.

Why did this happen?

- God's providence does not always make sense because we can only see it from this one vantage point. Where God sees history from beginning to end.

How does God's PROVIDENCE work with our FREE WILL?

I do not know. This is a mystery for me. All I know is it is TRUE!

Psalm 75:7 But it is God who judges: He brings one down, he exalts another.

Acts 4:27 Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. 28 They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen.

Proverbs 16:9 In his heart a man plans his course, but the LORD determines his steps.

WHERE IS GOD'S PROVIDENCE IN THIS BOOK?

- IT JUST SO HAPPENS . . .
- IT JUST SO HAPPENS - Vashti won't respond to the king
- IT JUST SO HAPPENS - Esther was lovely in form and feature and is chosen to be part of the King's harem
- IT JUST SO HAPPENS - Esther finds favor with those who are put in charge over her
- IT JUST SO HAPPENS - Esther is chosen as queen
- IT JUST SO HAPPENS - Mordecai over hears a plot against the king
- IT JUST SO HAPPENS - Xerxes cannot sleep and reads his chronicles and notices that nothing was done to reward Mordecai
- IT JUST SO HAPPENS - That Haman enters the court at just the moment when Xerxes seeks to reward Mordecai

IT JUST SO HAPPENS. . .

It is the same story in our lives

- It just so happens that you are talented and gifted in the ways in which you are.
- It just so happens you have the parents you have
- It just so happens you went to school where you did
- It just so happens you married who you married
- It just so happens you work for who you work for

The GRAND STORY

God provides Salvation for Israel

In providing salvation for Israel God provides Salvation for us.

- If Haman had his way and all the Jews were destroyed then the line of David – the line that Jesus came from - would have been destroyed and with it our hope for redemption.

ESTHER SERVES AS A TYPE OF REDEEMER

Esther Jesus

- God raises up one person for the salvation of the many
- God raises up one person for the salvation of the many
- Comes from a lowly place to serve in a Royal Place
- Comes from a lowly place to serve in a Royal Place
- Esther must stand against one who seeks to destroy God's people – Haman
- Jesus must stand against one who seeks to destroy God's people – Satan
- Mordecai warns Esther she may perish if she does not act
- Jesus knows all too well he will perish by acting on our behalf
- Esther hesitates to act out of fear for her life
- Jesus acts willingly knowing it will cost him his life
- Approaches the King to seek favor for others
- Approaches the God of the universe and BRINGS favor for others

Because Jesus has served as our Esther before the King we are able to come with confidence to seek the Kings favor.

- Because Jesus has secured for us our eternity through His death we are able to now act as Esther in our FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS moments.
- When there is fear there is self-preservation – where there is hope for life, for victory there is action.
- Because Christ has acted against the greatest enemy we are able to stand in places NOW to bring hope.

THIS IS WHAT DEFINES US AS A FAITH COMMUNITY

THE GOSPEL MAKES IT POSSIBLE TO GIVE OUR LIVES – FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS

We believe in the power of the Gospel to CHANGE US – TO CHANGE ANYONE

Even the Hamans of our lives have the possibility of being redeemed

Jesus has already done the heavy lifting so we might now give without concern for what is to come.

WE LOOK FOR THOSE ESTHER TYPE MOMENTS

ESTHER MOMENTS

DIVINE PROVIDENCE WORKS IN PARTNERSHIP WITH HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY

Esther 4:12 And they told Mordecai what Esther had said. 13 Then Mordecai told them to reply to Esther, “Do not think to yourself that in the king’s palace you will escape any more than all the other Jews. 14 For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father’s house will perish. AND WHO KNOWS WHETHER YOU HAVE NOT COME TO THE KINGDOM FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS?”

SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

Granting favor with people

+

Spirit empowered COURAGE

=

ESTHER MOMENT

For such a time as this

GOD GIVES THE PLATFORM

WE ARE EMPOWERED TO ACT AND WE MUST THEN CHOOSE TO ACT

God does this CORPORATELY as a faith community
And individually

CORPORATELY

Why are we here as a Church for SUCH A TIME AS THIS?

Visions Statement – to be a Biblical Community where the Gospel of Jesus Christ TRANSFORMS LIVES, RENEWS THE CITY, and IMPACTS THE WORLD.

**WE CAN NO LONGER SEE OURSELVES AS JUST PASSING THROUGH CHICAGO.
WE ARE NOT TOURISTS FOR THIS SEASON.**

We must see ourselves as being given a privilege positions FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS.

We have people. We have time. We have education. We have certain level of influence because of the jobs and roles we may have. We have a certain level of financial ability.

RENEWAL OF THE CITY

SYSTEMS and INDIVIDUAL lives

CHURCH IN EVERY NEIGHBORHOOD

Partner

Plant

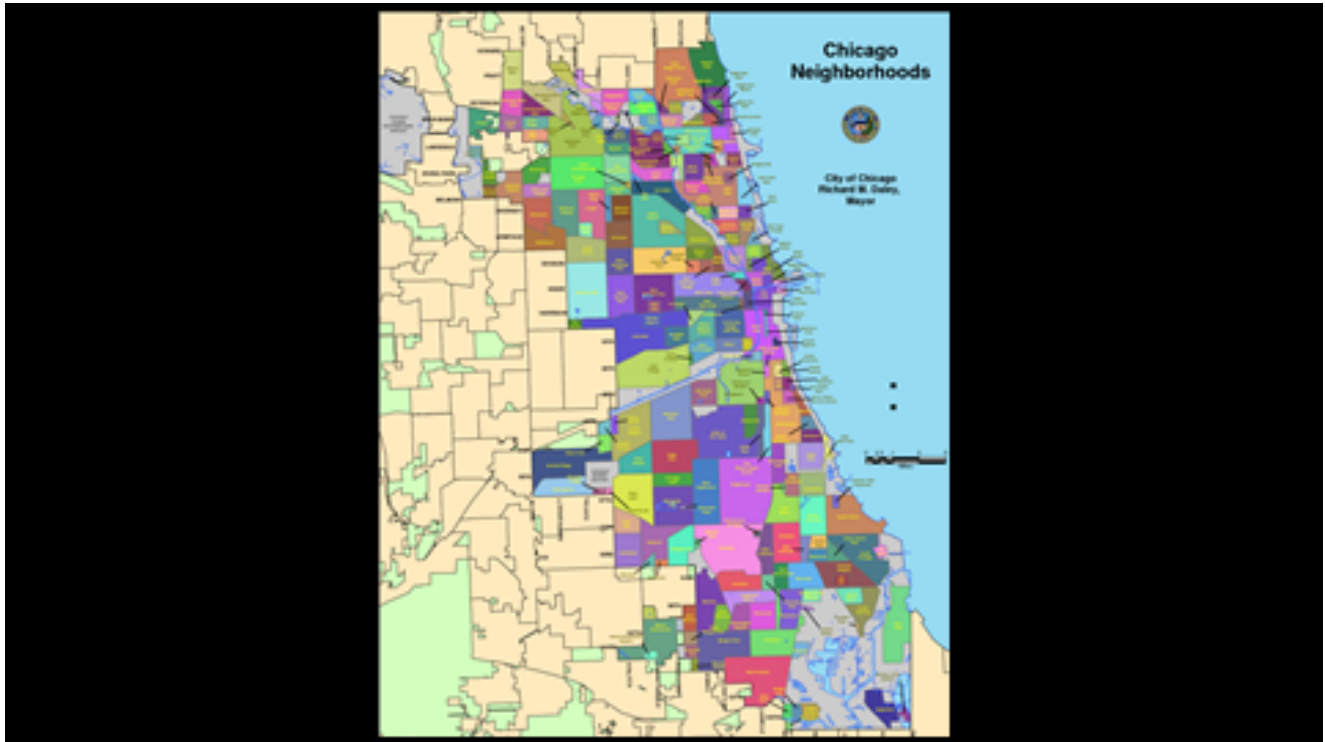
Re-launch

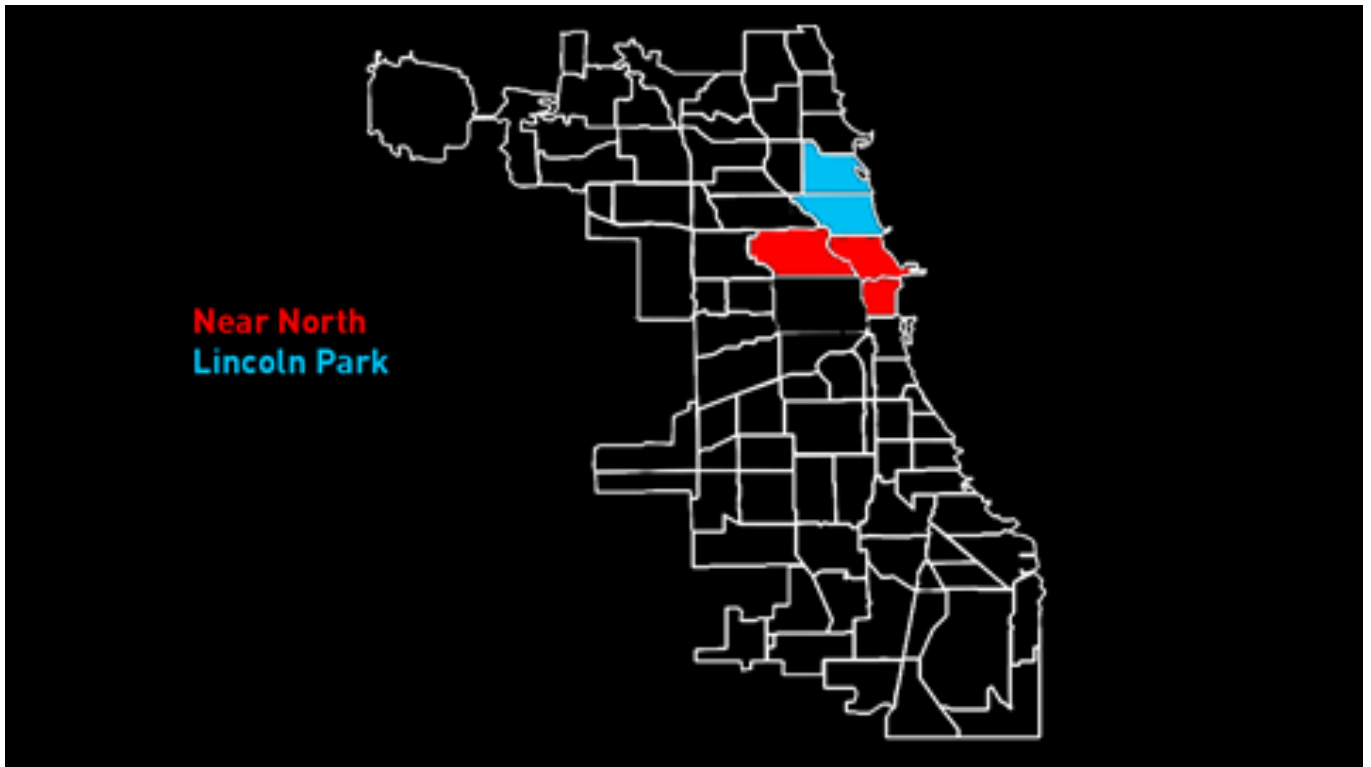
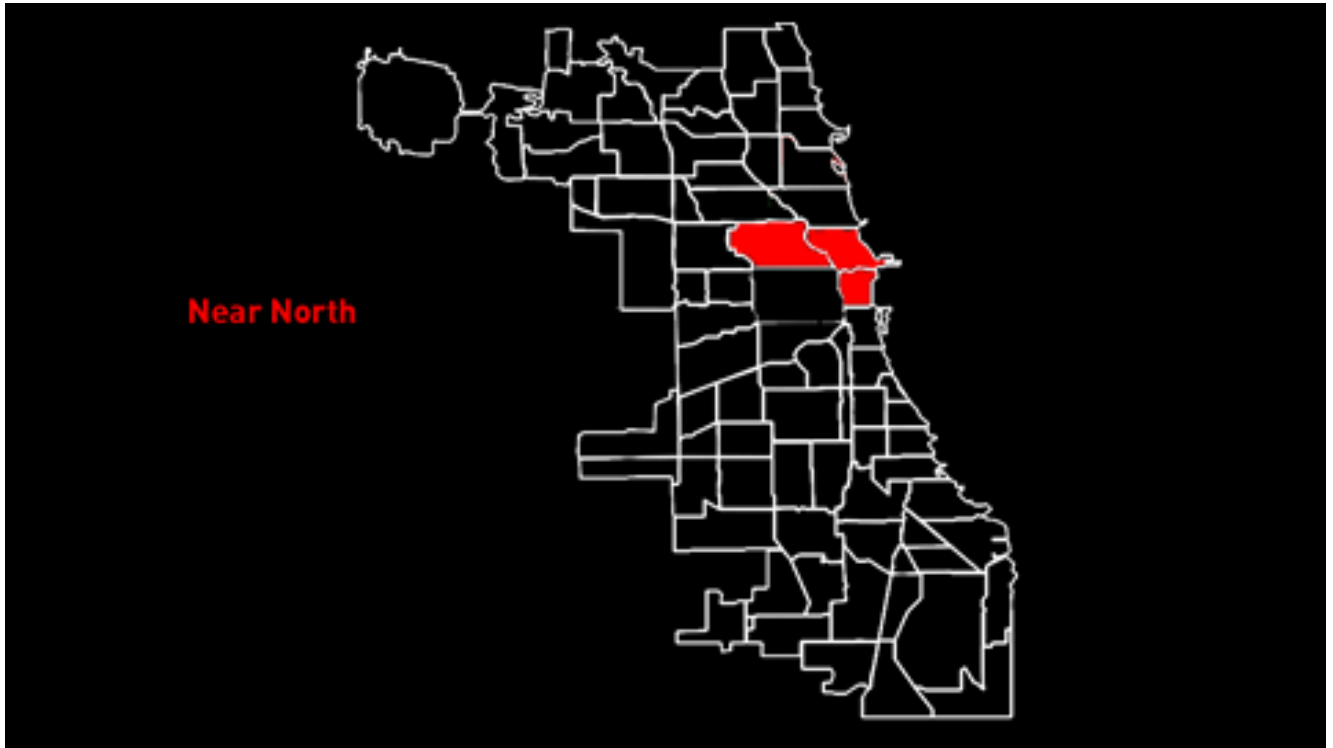
Over 77 Large Neighborhoods – COMMUNITY AREAS

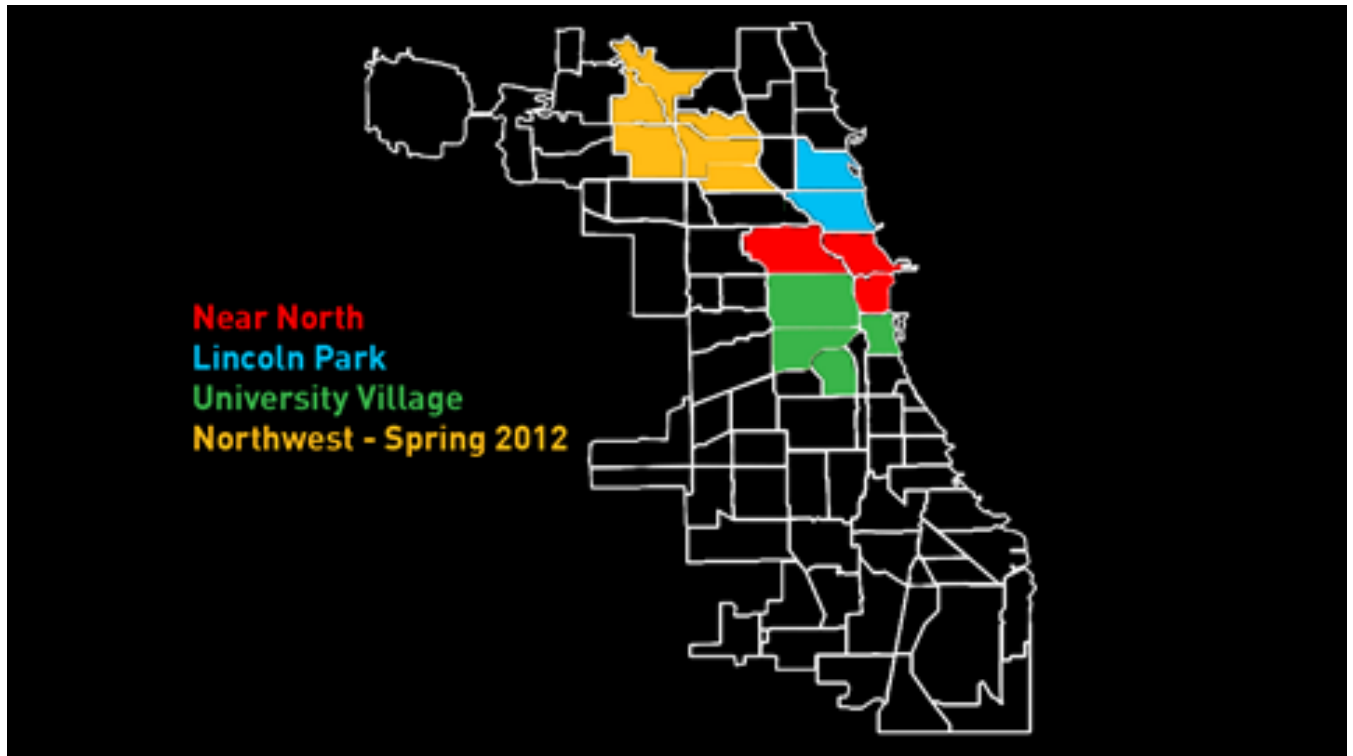
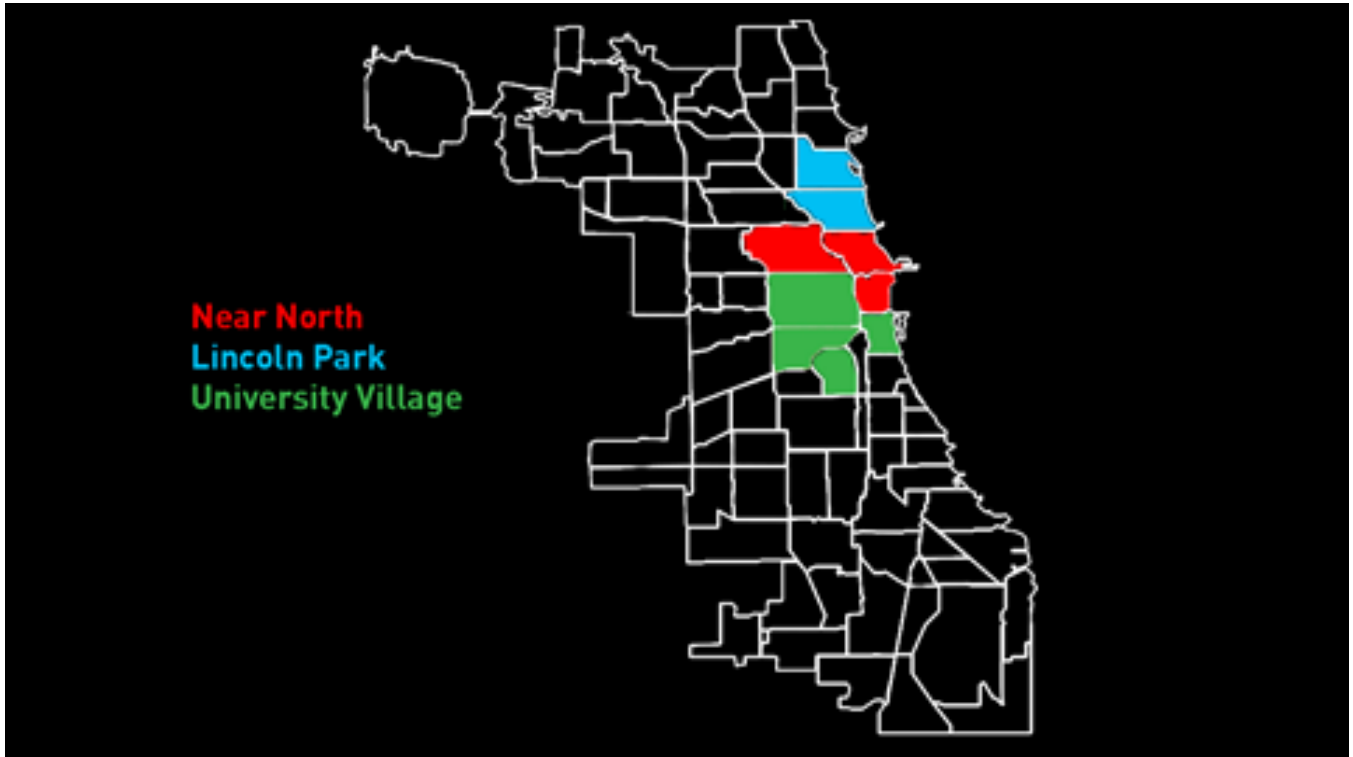
200 MICRO NEIGHBORHOODS

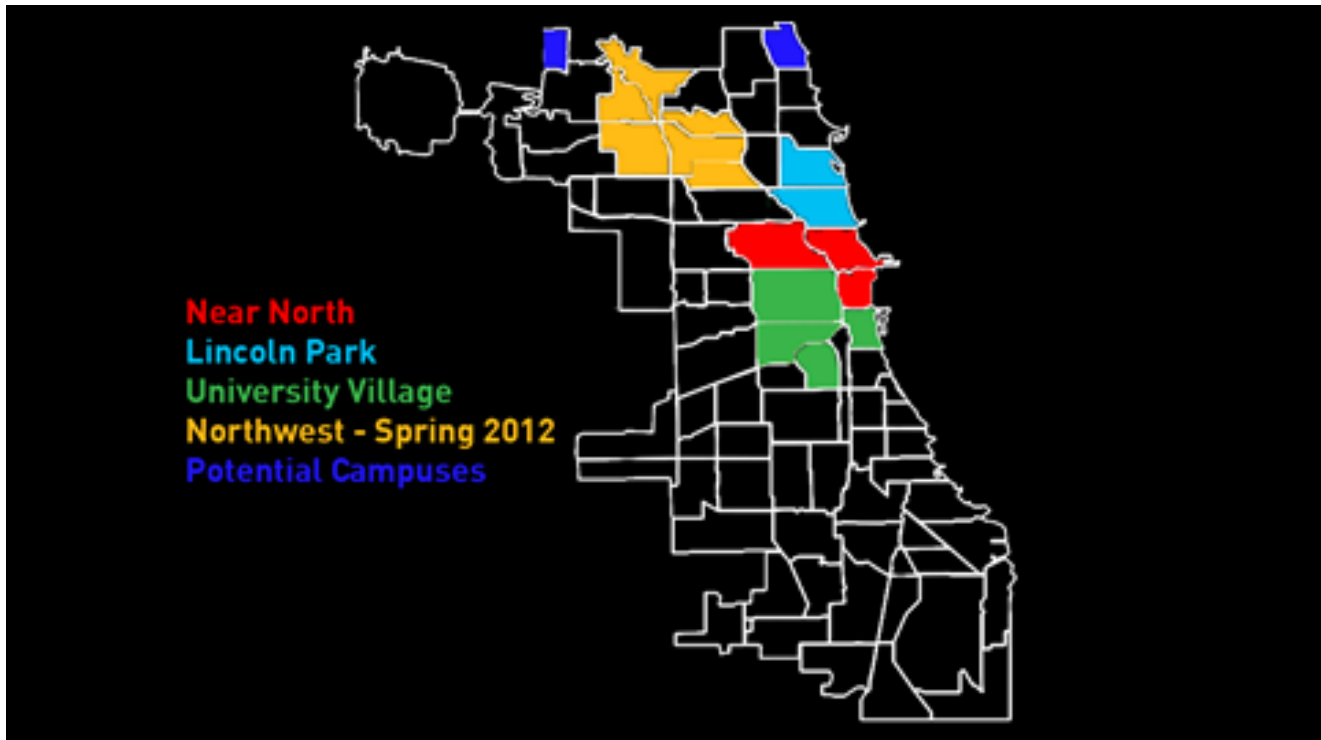
Engage with the PEOPLE of the city
Engage with the ISSUES of the city

Churches in other neighborhoods to come









RENEW CHICAGO

Video

HOW WILL WE KNOW WE ARE SEEING RENEWAL?

Reading scores improve
 The homeless have places to live
 The hungry are fed
 Single parents feel supported
 Safety in our city increases

Neighborhood renewal takes place

Churches are strengthened

Folks are walking over the line of faith
 The broken find wholeness
 Hurting marriages know hope
 Those working through addictions find healing

Story

I've been able to tutor with C2A kids for over 3 years. I've gotten especially close with one student in particular. While he was in 4th grade 3 years ago at Jenner, I assisted in his classroom every Tuesday during math. And every Tuesday during Math without fail he would always ask, "Jen, what we havin' for dinner this week?" He knew that since I cook for C2A, I made the decision of what was served that night. He would have nachos every week if it was up to him.

Through the past 3 years I watched him journey through new schools and serious family illness. The joy he found in becoming an uncle. I was part of his cheering section at his basketball games.

Recently I learn what kind of impact I was having. A few weeks ago he came to C2A ready to leave because he normal tutor was not there that night. All he wanted to do was go home. I asked if I could sub for his tutor and he got this big grin on his face.

Then came Christmas. At our annual C2A family Christmas party, out of nowhere and not prompted by anything he quietly came up to me and simply said, "Love ya." It made me stop in my tracks and it's a moment I'll never forget.

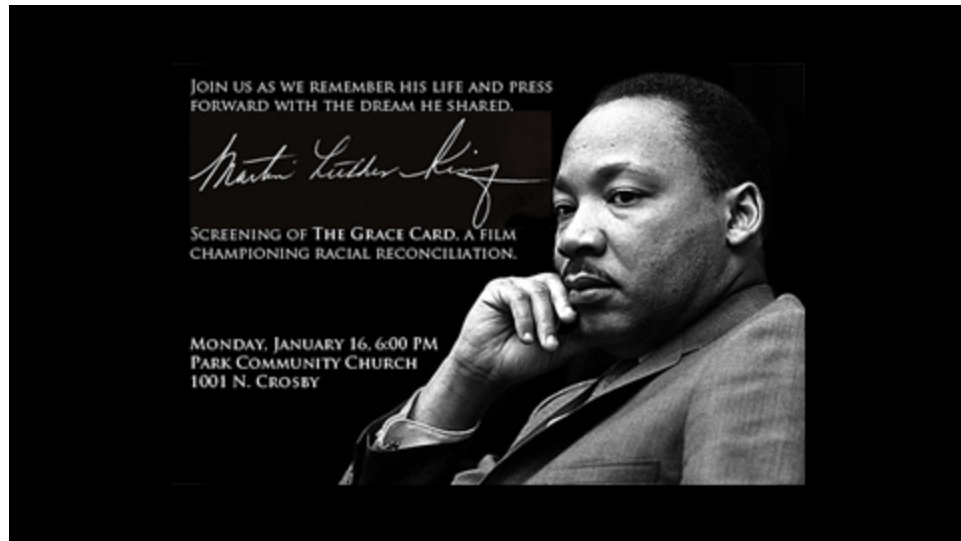
FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS

PART OF SEEING OUR CITY RENEWED IS BEING ENGAGED WITH OTHER CHURCHES IN PURSUING RACIAL RECONCILIATION

MLK Monday – January 16

Hosting an evening with several other churches from the south side of the city
Movie, short challenge to go with it

THE GRACE CARD – Championing Racial Reconciliation



GAINING A PERSPECTIVE ON WHAT GOD IS DOING IN CHICAGO AND OTHER WORLD CLASS CITIES AROUND THE WORLD

PERSPECTIVES CLASS @ PARK

Starts Thursday Night – January 19

Every Thursday there will be a different speaker covering the biblical, historical, cultural and strategic perspectives of the gospel's movement around the world.

I don't know of someone who has taken this class and regretted it

GOD ORCHESTRATES THE DIRECTION OF NOT JUST OUR CHURCH BUT EACH OF OUR LIVES.

SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

Granting favor with people

+

Spirit empowered **COURAGE**

=

ESTHER MOMENT

For such a time as this

GOD GIVES THE PLATFORM, WE ARE EMPOWERED TO ACT AND WE MUST THEN CHOOSE TO ACT

INDIVIDUALLY

You will have small and big ESTHER MOMENTS
Planned and spontaneous Esther moments in your life throughout this year

God's sovereign hand has us in just the right place at just the right time

May seem like a simple act to some
But it might be profound to others

You will have a **CHOICE TO ACT** or **MAKE EXCUSES**

ESTHER MAKES EXCUSES

Mordecai says to her – use your position to plead for us

Esther 4:7 and Mordecai told him all that had happened to him, and the exact sum of money that Haman had promised to pay into the king's treasuries for the destruction of the Jews. 8 Mordecai also gave him a copy of the written decree issued in Susa for their destruction, that he might show it to Esther and explain it to her and command her to go to the king to beg his favor and plead with him on behalf of her people.

10 Then Esther spoke to Hathach and commanded him to go to Mordecai and say, 11 "All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces know that if any man or woman goes to the king inside the inner court without being called, there is but one law—to be put to death, except the one to whom the king holds out the golden scepter so that he may live. But as for me, I have not been called to come in to the king these thirty days."

WILL IT BE EASY? MAYBE NOT

The reason there are a need for ESTHER MOMENTS is because there are HAMAN'S close by.

- There are Haman's who seek to destroy.
- Who seek to resist
- Those who do not love our God. Those who do not love us.
- Those who would seek to bring us harm.
- Those who seek to hinder the renewal process of the city.
- Those who will hate us just because of who our Spiritual Father is.

ONE OF THE GREAT THEOLOGICAL MISUNDERSTANDINGS IN THE CHRISTIAN FAITH IS THAT LIFE SHOULD BE EASY FOR US ONCE WE WALK OVER THE LINE OF FAITH.

- To speak honestly if life was easy or comfortable we would never see a need for God. No need for faith. No need to trust.
- We do not want to stand for injustices
- We do not want to engage in life altering conversations with others
- We do not want to make Spiritually moral decisions that may mean we will not gain what we want or think we deserve

IT IS TO SCARY FOR US – I DID NOT SIGN UP FOR THIS

- **Being a follower of Christ IS HARD and we may believe that life should be different for us.**
- **We believe we are owed an easy life, a good life, a life that meets all our needs.**

Esther potentially gave up her future for the sake of **SUCH A TIME AS THIS**

We want to see ourselves like Esther who is has anything she wants at her fingertips. All the help, clothes, and luxuries she could ever think of with little of the concern.

But, God did not give her the position of Queen for her own comfort, but for the sake of others.

Esther had to be willing to say – I could loose all of this. I could loose my life. But, I must act because it is the right thing to do.

We must act

- God puts us in the situation to act. He then empowers us to act. We do not muster the courage to act. THIS IS KEY

SPIRIT LED COURAGE

GOD GIVEN COURAGE

A COURAGE THAT IS NOT A PART OF YOU, BUT IT IS A PART OF GOD IN YOUR

Every Esther needs a Mordecai

MORDECAI – can be a person or a small community of friends and family

- Sometimes we need to be a Mordecai and remind those who have been given opportunities to act that they need to act with boldness
- We need to remind others that God has given them a platform not for their comfort, but for God's glory

- Encourage means to lend someone courage
- It is reminding someone that God has placed them in the position they are in for **SUCH A TIME AS THIS**
- What is the right thing to do?

ESTHER ASK MORDECAI to get the people together to FAST and prayer is implied for 3 days
She would do the same thing

They fasted – we are going to talk about this in a couple of weeks

Because we live in community we seek to walk with others in their **SUCH A TIME AS THIS MOMENT**

Esther 4:15 Then Esther told them to reply to Mordecai, 16 “Go, gather all the Jews to be found in Susa, and hold a fast on my behalf, and do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my young women will also fast as you do. Then I will go to the king, though it is against the law, and if I perish, I perish.”

- We all need a person or small community who will remind us of we must do. To encourage us to take the right step.
- Sometimes the Mordecais in our lives see clearer than we do what is at stake. They understand better than we do the position and power we wield for the sake of others.
- They are able to call out our fear.

Look back on the last 5 years of your life. Look at all the **IT JUST SO HAPPENED.**

All those **IT JUST SO HAPPENED** are God’s providence bearing fruit in your life.

- Why the university you attended?
- Moving to Chicago – why this City and why now?
- Where you live – why that condo, that apartment, that house?
- Roommates – why these roommates and why now?
- Neighbors – why these neighbors and why now?
- Why this job? – some of you were not the brightest or the most talented and look where God has placed you
- Where you work – why those co-workers?

WHY ARE YOU WHERE YOU ARE? WORK? LIVE? FRIENDS?

BIG and SMALL ESTHER MOMENTS

ILL – The 26 year man who said to his co-workers who were going to a gentlemen's club – he would not be going – as soon as he spoke up a couple of other guys said neither were they – as they walked back to the hotel one of the guys said thanks for speaking up. I needed the courage. **FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS**

- Someone befriending a neighbor
- Someone falsely accused by a boss who had a quick temper and could fly off the handle - Another subordinate stepping up to say it was not true
- Being a foster parents
- Adopting
- Taking in a nephew when he was 15 – 16 years old and having him wreck our car