



LIGHTLINES

Strategic Ministry

by Eli Williams

At the 2nd Annual Springfield Mayor's Breakfast, Urban Light Ministries' Board Treasurer Jay Weygandt remarked that when selecting a nonprofit to support, one should choose one that is strategic in its work. His statement reminded me why we do what we do and prompted me to remind you, dear reader. We set out years ago to improve the holistic well-being of children. That was and is our goal. Strategy is the overarching plan for achieving a goal, while tactics are the specific actions taken to execute that strategy.

After over a decade of children's evangelism work via the Sonshine Clubs, it became clear that the children we were ministering to continued to suffer because half were growing up in homes where their fathers did not live and/or were not co-parenting well. Although many of them were receptive to the gospel of Christ and came to faith in Him, their lives did not improve because their home environment remained the same. Father absence was and is still a significant contributor to child poverty, academic failure, behavioral problems, emotional issues, juvenile crime, illegal drug use, premature sexual activity, and spiritual bankruptcy. Yet, no one in our region seriously attempted to target fathers.

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We have reached over 171,000 people through our Google Ad Grant in 2024.

FATHERING STRONG Progress Report

Fathering Strong continues to grow as a means of connecting, engaging and empowering fathers to become better dads and improve the lives of their children. We now have over 325 subscribed members on the platform.

Within the past 6 months Eli Williams and Bruce Stapleton have participated in three national Fatherhood conferences presenting Fathering Strong. A pilot program supporting fathers with children in the Ohio HeadStart program will begin in January with possible partial grant funding from the Ohio Commission on Fatherhood.

Future releases within the platform include a church-based fatherhood curriculum, additional devotionals and moderator lead programs such as POPS101 and PointMan that are currently offered.

The weekly blog posts and podcasts are reaching fathers and need your continued support. We have reached over 88,000 people interested in learning about what the Bible says about fathers with over 14,000 clicking for more information. Please consider supporting Fathering Strong.



Annual Holiday

Open House

Join us on **December 19** from 11:30 AM to 1:00 PM at our new offices!

20 S. Limestone St. - Community Room

Food and Fellowship



Strategic Ministry (*continued*)

Our Strategy to Help Children

We wrestled with this for some time. Then, God moved us to add a fatherhood initiative to our work. In 2006, we adopted the vision of "Turning the Hearts of Fathers to their Children" (from Malachi 4:6) for Urban Light Ministries and started a fatherhood class. Our fatherhood focus has evolved from there. From the beginning, our strategy has been to achieve better outcomes for children by helping men be better dads and co-parents, whether they share the same home or not.

Turning Fathers' Hearts

The following is excerpted from an [article](#) by John Piper.

*What does it mean for a father to turn his heart toward his child?
Well, what is the opposite of having a heart turned toward a child?
The opposite is to have the heart turned away. Three examples:
Fathers, you can have your heart turned away from your children simply by ignoring them.
By being so swallowed up in your work that all they get are the dregs of your life.
You can have your heart turned away from your children by being abusive.
It may be that without even hearing yourself, your communication with them is a
litany of disapproval and put-downs. Why? Because your heart is not toward them.
You don't feel what they feel. Your heart is frozen in a posture of habitual unkindness.*

*Or you can have your heart turned away from your children through
an embittered spirit of disappointment: that you are forgotten by them,
or that they have let you down in the way they live,
or that they have taken you for granted and never said thanks for all you did.
Where is the heart, then?
In the poisoned puddle of self-pity that threatens to grow into an ocean of resentment.*

Our Tactics

Our efforts focus on reaching fathers' hearts and redirecting them to their children. Often, fathers we encounter have committed to being the best dad they can be for their children but need instruction, encouragement, inspiration, or simply the camaraderie of other fathers. Fathering Strong®, our suite of resources for fathers, was created to meet those needs.

Fathering Strong resources include online classes, weekly blog posts, weekly podcasts, devotionals, and the Fathering Strong® mobile app, which allows dads to be a part of a virtual community of fathers. These resources are provided free of charge because of the support of people like you.

Thank you!

May the Lord bless you richly in Jesus's name.



Eli Williams, ULM President and CEO

CARE-IT'S FOR KIDS FUND



2024 Springfield Mayor's Breakfast

ULM hosted the second annual Mayor's Breakfast on Thursday, November 21, in the ballroom of the Courtyard by Marriott Hotel in downtown Springfield. This year's theme was "Celebrating Springfield's Transplant Heroes." We were pleased to honor ten people who moved to the city, put down roots, and made a noteworthy contribution to the community.

More than 200 enjoyed a gourmet plated meal as they were serenaded by the amazing guitarist Geoffrey Walker. He said this about the breakfast: "It was an amazing event. I felt like I was sitting in a room with ALL of my local heroes! It was amazing and incredibly uplifting in a time of great darkness in the City. I told my wife that I left with the greatest hope for our city. And thank you for inviting me to play - I always enjoy the opportunity to do so. God bless you and your ministry - it has and continues to make a huge difference in the lives of the people in our community. Let me know if you need any other assistance from me. You are always a priority on my list!"

[Click here for Springfield News Sun Article](#)



2024 Recipients

TRANSPLANT HEROES PROJECT



**Dr. Jo Alice
Blondin**



**Ernest Calvin
Brown, Sr.**



**Marty
Dennis**



**Dr. David
Estrop**



**Miguelito
Jerome**



**Dr. Pius
Kurian**



**John
Landess**



**Wally
Martinson**



**William Hershel
Miller**



**Ted
Vander Roest**

Upcoming Events

Holiday Open House – Thursday, December 19, 2024.
11:30 AM to 1:00 PM
Commerce Pointe Community Room, 20 S. Limestone St., Springfield

FatherFest/Juneteenth - Saturday, June 14 9:00 AM to 7:00 PM @ Gammon House Green, Springfield

Good Dad Award Presentations (nominations are open now) June 14 at 1:30 PM @ Gammon House Green

Wyler Charity Invitational Golf Scramble benefiting ULM - Monday, August 18 9:00 AM @ Springfield Country Club

Springfield Mayor's Breakfast - Thursday, November 20, 7:30 AM @ Courtyard by Marriott

Follow Our Weekly Posts and Podcasts

Fathering Strong Weekly Blog Post - Monday Mornings

Fathering Strong Podcast - Tuesdays at 8:00 PM
Subscribe to YouTube, Apple Podcasts, or Spotify Podcasts.

How We Can Work Together with You to Make a Difference

Your support is crucial in making a lasting positive impact on youth, families, and communities.

Donate: Your generous donations enable us to expand our reach by building and growing the online Fathering Strong community. It also provides the funds to develop new collaborations, programs, and resources for youth, fathers, and families.

Volunteer: Join us by giving your time and expertise. Whether mentoring young boys or fathers, moderating a fatherhood community, volunteering at events, offering professional skills, or board service, your contribution matters.

Spread the Word: Help us raise awareness of this important work by sharing our mission with your friends, family, and community. Get your company involved with support to drive a greater and faster impact.

Pray with us: Intercede for us as we seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness by turning the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to Him.

Together, we will build a safer, more resilient future for all as God helps us.

Special End-of-Year Appeal

We seek to raise \$25,000 to close the year well and help us begin the new year on a solid financial footing. Every \$100 you contribute will enable us to provide one father with Fathering Strong resources. Please consider a one-time gift of \$100 or a monthly commitment of \$10.

Scan QR Code to donate



CARE-IT'S FOR KIDS FUND

Christmas Blessings Project



ANONYMOUSLY BLESS A CHILD THIS CHRISTMAS

Preserve the parent's dignity!

Easy 3 Step Process



1. Urban Light Identifies Families

- Works with local homeless shelter for names of needy families with school age kids
- Parents provide the kid's wish lists with ages, genders, clothing sizes, etc.
- Being anonymous givers honors the parents and helps build the parent/child bonds

Parents are the Hero!



2. You Purchase and Wrap Gifts

- Adopt a family to purchase gifts for
- You buy the gifts, wrap and label them
- Deliver the wrapped gifts to the shelter who distributes them to the parents

Program reimburses up to \$100 / Child



3. Parents give gifts to children

- Parent surprises their child on Christmas with the gifts
- The parent builds a bond with their child and gets to be the hero!

Kid's get a Christmas to remember



To adopt a family or donate scan the QR code or go to: www.urbanlight.org



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