



## OUR STORY

Bridge City Community began with a simple prayer –

**“God, show me your plan for the city of Chattanooga & allow me to trust in your guidance and control.”**

I was participating in my first Daniel fast [essentially a super-charged vegan diet for three weeks without caffeine, sugar, and processed foods] and I prayed this prayer each day for three weeks. About halfway through, I became frustrated with God that I was fasting and not receiving any clarity of vision as an answer to my prayer. I vividly remember the moment that I was so fed up that I became frustrated with God and finally said, “God, I’ve been doing this stupid fast and your supposed to give me something. Why aren’t you answering me?!”

It was in the middle of those two sentences that I received my answer – and felt totally foolish for doubting in the first place. In all honesty, it was as close to hearing an audible response from God as I have ever experienced. God’s response? One church to transform a neighborhood // One neighborhood to transform the city. I had never lived in Chattanooga. I did not know the neighborhoods, the city, the people, or the culture; but, I knew that our focus would be on neighborhood churches that would, by pursuing transformation, would transform the city of Chattanooga. What I did not know, was what that church would look like, where it would be located, or what God had in store for our journey. I saw a glimpse into the future but had no clue what the implications of that answered prayer would be.

Upon arrival in Chattanooga in June 2013, I began to explore the city and see what doors God would open. I had always dreamed of a sweet, hipster church where curly mustaches, skinny jeans, and indie music would flow like the milk & honey of the Promised Land – that wasn’t God’s plan for citywide transformation. Instead, God opened the doorway to a neighborhood where justice, mercy, and humility would be demanded of our church. God opened up a door that demanded faithfulness to the very heart of his plan of salvation for the world – reconciliation. God opened up the door to a neighborhood where almost none of my seminary &

church planter training would be helpful. God opened up a door that demanded trust in him that he would guide and control the future of Bridge City Community.

God opened the door to the southside neighborhoods of Alton Park & St. Elmo. Our story is just beginning in the southside of the city. We can't wait to see where God leads us and how the pages will continue to fill up with the experiences of justice, mercy, humility, transformation, and reconciliation.

## RECONCILIATION

We are committed to working toward reconciliation in Alton Park & St. Elmo. So, to borrow the words from Christian Community Development Association...

*"...we follow Jesus's example of reconciliation. We go where the brokenness is. We live among the people in some of America's neediest neighborhoods. We become one with our neighbors until there is no longer an 'us' and 'them' but only a 'we.' And, in the words of the prophet Jeremiah, 'we work and pray for the well-being of our city [or neighborhood],' trusting that if the entire community does well and prospers, then we will prosper also."*

### ALTON PARK

Alton Park is a neighborhood in need of transformation. As a community surrounded by revitalization efforts throughout the city, Alton Park is being overlooked and underserved. It is a neighborhood that suffers from gang violence, drug addiction, poor education, inadequate housing options, and broken families. [Here](#) is more information on Alton Park.

Bridge City Community seeks to unify the voices of Alton Park bringing about community development and empowerment of its residents. Our neighbors in Alton Park are not statistics, demographics, or problems in need of fixing. Rather, they bear the mark of our Creator as sons and daughters - just like anyone else. Therefore, we want to see crime and drug abuse statistics decrease while job and affordable housing opportunities increase, in addition to the reconciliation of families.

### ST. ELMO

St. Elmo is one of Chattanooga's oldest suburbs. As a result of this historic neighborhood falling into disrepair a few decades ago, an interest in revitalizing the community has taken root. The goal for the St. Elmo community is to create and maintain a vibrant neighborhood in which residents of different ages as well as various racial, social, and economic backgrounds can live together in harmony, appreciating and enjoying each other's differences as well as commonalities. It is the community's ambition to make St. Elmo a neighborhood where people desire to live and visit.

Although not oppressed by some of the same physical issues as the residents of Alton Park, the reality is that there are those in St. Elmo who suffer from brokenness and addiction. There are families in St. Elmo fighting back divorce, individuals who crave affection & love, people who are poor and begging for something more.

## BRIDGING THE GAP

Bridge City Community will welcome the residents of St. Elmo & Alton Park to join us as we pursue acts of justice, works of mercy, and walk humbly. Our goal is to bring these two historic neighborhoods together, reconciled and unified, to transform the southside of Chattanooga. The voices of the southside have been divided far too long and the effects of gentrification are taking a toll on the community. Our city is still segregated. Inequity exists within our communities. Our neighborhoods are divided.

We want transformation through reconciliation of the southside. Bridge City Community will stand in the middle and bridge the gap, because we believe that Jesus is able to heal all brokenness, restore every relationship, and redeem every life.