Woven Together

Michelle Bullmore 26 July 2023



I recently returned from an outreach to the USA where I had the privilege of visiting three Four12 partnering churches in South Carolina, Newport Beach and San Clemente in California.

JoshGen Upstate, South Carolina

Walking into JoshGen Upstate in South Carolina felt like an extension of my own church, where I met and made new friends who it felt like I had known for years! Our team was made up of saints and leaders from four different Four12 church partners, and despite our differences, we shared the same DNA and values.

The JoshGen Upstate church was birthed in sacrifice – so many left family, friends and homes to relocate from across the world to join it. God is building something beautiful. Since it was planted (during the Covid-19 outbreak, with less than 50 people), God has done the impossible and they have purchased a church building and already raised a massive 20% deposit!

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Our time with JoshGen Upstate was spent in and out of one another's homes, meeting up in town, an early morning prayer meeting, ladies and men's meetings, coffee connects, and a few braais with pockets of evangelism in between.

One highlight of this trip was meeting a lady named Kayla who was out walking her dog – we invited her to community that evening and, despite her having tentative plans, she came and was loved!

Another highlight was praying at JoshGen Upstate's new venue. It was incredible dreaming together and praying to find God's heart for this church. A few weeks after our visit it was 'all hands-on deck', with the men grafting hard to follow a blueprint that would make their new building 'beautiful'. This picture of them renovating & building in the physical is also representative of how they are also spiritually building their church according to God's blueprint and following His pattern and ways.

We left having made friends for life!

Joshua Generation Church, Newport Beach

We took a flight and arrived in California primarily to visit Heritage, but we also had the privilege of visiting Joshua Generation Church Newport Beach for their Sunday afternoon meetings. This church reminded me of what it must have been like in the early days of Joshua Generation Church in South Africa, when they too met in a lounge. It was awesome to see and hear stories of what God is doing in people's lives and I am excited to see what God will do through this church.

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Heritage Christian Community Church, San Clemente

The SA team for our time with Heritage Christian Community Church (*now Joshua Generation Church, San Clemente) was made up of 24 saints from across seven Joshua Generation Church congregations, and our hearts were once again instantly connected to so many of the Heritage saints and leaders. It was a very relational time–joining in with their everyday church life, communities, a new deacons connect time, a combined elders and deacons connect time, going for walks, praying for and encouraging each other, and sharing many meals and coffees with

one another.

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We also had lots of fun! I loved the Hollywood Walk of Fame – it was interesting to see what 'success' looks like for so many of the superstars. God reminded me of Luke 10:20: "rejoice that your name is written in heaven." This was such a good reminder that in this life we have the choice to either get caught up in building a life of 'success' by following the world's pattern, or in following God's way, where we lay down our lives to find the real treasure. And how cool to know that my name is recorded in heaven, which will last beyond an earthly pavement and into eternity.

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Heritage has had its fair share of challenges, but it feels like they are in a new season and Jesus is making something beautiful, working both individually and corporately, with each work uniquely different and personal. It feels like God is making Heritage to be a city on a hill – and the people will come soon. "You are the light of the world. A city situated on a hill cannot be hidden. And they will shine for the world to see" (Matthew 5:14&16).

One of my favourite stories was hearing about a young Christian man whom God led to Heritage where he was radically saved. He then recently had an opportunity to significantly reduce his parole by relocating to take part in a programme which would take him away from the church, but he chose to stay close to church.

Another highlight was working alongside Nick Whelan in organising this outreach. I had watched his Discipleship Changes Lives – Nick's story video a year ago and it was so powerful to see how

God is now using Nick in the area of discipleship to radically impact the lives of so many in the USA. Those who discipled Nick and invested in him now have an eternal inheritance in the USA and beyond. Plus, we got to celebrate Nick and Caitlin Stanfield's engagement – a definite power couple in His Kingdom.

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A few of the SA team joined Heritage's youth camp where they were stretched and used by God and God worked powerfully in the youth. There were radical testimonies of salvations, youths being filled with the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues, hearing God's voice and prophesying for the first time.

When I reflect on my time in America, it encourages me that what God is doing at home in Cape Town, South Africa, He is also doing in the USA and all over the world. He is bringing shifts and changes, realigning, strengthening and encouraging us all, and removing our stains and blemishes so that we will be a pure, spotless Bride.

If there was ever an outreach Scripture, it could be Romans 1:11-12: "For I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gifts to make you strong – that is so that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith."
This is what God did in all of us: He stretched, used, encouraged and strengthened us all. He used a thread from South Africa and has woven it into the tapestry of the USA. He is building something much bigger and more beautiful than we can currently see.

During my time in America, I experienced love, generosity and hospitality from 'strangers' on another level and, best of all, I made friendships that will extend into eternity. I feel like I have left a piece of my heart in the USA, and I am so excited to see what God is going to do in this nation. Hopefully we will all meet up again soon, somewhere in the nations.

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