

## GRATEFUL TO BE EMPOWERED TO LIVE OUT MY THEOLOGY IN THE HILL



I am so very grateful to the people who empowered me to serve and minister to those that live in the Hill community of New Haven, Connecticut. I get it: not everyone can uproot, change vocation, or relocate into the proximity of neighbors who live in neighborhoods like the Hill. So for some, God's plan is to *reallocate* and *relocate* their own resources to support the likes of people such as my wife, Lisa, and me in a neighborhood like the Hill, ministering in, with, and through a church like Christ Presbyterian Church in The Hill. The generosity of friends, family, and some we've just met and some we haven't even met yet—have empowered me to pastor a church and a community in a place called the Hill.

The Hill is actually a famous neighborhood that few people outside know about—well, at least famous for its place in American and New Haven's history. Still, the Hill is more infamously known as “Sodom's Hill.” Yet in the early history of New Haven, the Trowbridge neighborhood (where Lisa and I have an apartment) was designated as *a suburb*—yes, that is correct, *a suburb*.

Back in early American history, the wealthy and affluent settled in city-centers, that is, urban living. As the immigrants and the poor increased in New Haven, the bottom-demographics were moved to new quarters in the *sub*-urban areas just outside of the City. Think walking, horse, and horse and buggy as the primary modes of travel, so suburbs were basically the outer districts of an urban area. In fact, if you dig down, now, under the sidewalks and tar of the roads around Trowbridge Square (where our apartment in the Hill is located), you'd find the old trolley car tracks; for this suburb was the trolley-hub to catch a ride to West or East Haven or even downtown New Haven. Ironically there is a little hill (again think horseback and walking hill) to get *up to* Trowbridge, thus, the naming of our Hill community: “*We're going up the hill to catch a trolley*” . . . “*going up the Hill to walk home*” . . . became over time, “*We're going to the Hill*” . . . “*We live in the Hill* . . .” And as this small district settled with immigrants and the indigent of that day, it became dense as a very impoverished, poor suburb of New Haven, eventually being saddled with the nickname “Sodom's Hill.”

My supporters empower me to minister in this messy and hurting, but beautiful community, relocating their financial blessings to help the gospel to be planted and grow in the heart of the Hill, changing lives, and lifting them and their neighbors above its unsavory nickname.

*“What the poor need is not charity but capital, not caseworkers but coworkers. And what the rich need is a wise, honorable and just way of divesting themselves of their overabundance” (Clarence Jordan).*



To many, the Hill community is an *uncool* place. Planting and growing a church in the midst of an urban (aka old suburban), under-resourced, minority-populated (51% Hispanic; 39% Black) neighborhood is crazy, yet absolutely needed: 43% unemployment; nearly 85% of Hill residents live in subsidized housing; and, 70% of New Haven's parole population is resident in the Hill. This neighborhood needs a gospel-centered, community-focused church in its midst. My financial partners empower me to empower our congregation to focus on the community. And, I am so proud (in every right sense of that word) that is exactly what CPC in The Hill is known for: *being a church that is for its neighborhood, one that is present, many times outside its building's walls, serving its community*.

The presence of CPC in The Hill helps to ameliorate the cliché that *address is destiny*. And, by God's grace and the power of the gospel, we see lives changing, which will cause this community to flourish. Outside support allows me to spend time pastoring amidst this very poor and hurting neighborhood, and, as well, to be involved in the community, such as a member of the Hill Management Team and by showing up, literally, everywhere in the Hill. And, such outside support ensures I can continue sharing the gospel and, even, as it so happens, just outside my apartment door do some regular street pastoral counseling.



*“Jesus challenged the powers that ruled the world by deeds of justice and mercy. These were not marginal but central to his ministry” (Michael W. Goheen).*

God certainly has prepared me for this ministry, theologically, as well as, socially and vocationally. I call it now, “My-Lived-Out-Theology.”

- ☛ 30+ years of Bible study has disciplined me regarding how God relates to the poor and how His people are to relate to the poor as a priority of God’s kingdom.
- ☛ Because of life’s past circumstances (i.e., God’s providence), I have lived more in proximity to the poor and under-resourced for, now, the greater part of my adult life.
- ☛ I have been employed in social action for 20+ years before stepping (back) into church ministry here at CPC in The Hill, having worked for and with the population I am now serving as a Pastor. I have been a grant writer, program developer, and planner for social and workforce development programs that serve the needs of the poor and under-resourced.

I have always thought the past 20 years were God’s training for me. I’ve written on this (i.e., social action, church, and evangelism), articles, even a book (*Wasted Evangelism*), and in some way that, too, has been self-preparation for this ministry, as well.

*“If you are in a city or a community that is broken, where people are burned out or spiritually lost, where there is violence—stay there as long as you can” (Tim Keller).*



I am humbled by my call to the Hill, more so that people, friends, churches (a few churches anyway) financially support our work here. I am grateful to those who give of their own resources so I am empowered to serve and to be, as some in the Hill refer to me, the pastor of the Hill. Although I have yet to reach 100% of our fundraising needs, still the generosity of others enables me to do this full time. Trust me, it takes full time. This allows me to be *where* I need to be *when* I need to be *there*; not just hospital visits or at a kitchen table or a church activity, but out my front door to counsel those, as if they are waiting for me, need a pastoral word or prayer, to show up at town and community meetings, and simply to be visible in the needed places of Hill life—places where a pastor is needed.

Our church grows mostly with the same population that lacks resources, this means more outside resources are needed. We are a church that has become well known so our outreach activities (especially ones related to food!) increase in the people served; thus, our need for our resources to increase. The FY20 (Sep-Aug) budget reflected a mere 6% increase and our fundraising goal is \$47,000. However, a vision budget (with an additional 30K) would include the funds to help obtain someone dedicated to reaching Hill teenagers, funds to help people in our congregation start businesses, to start our own coffee shop, and our own food co-op here in the Hill. But these must wait until more outside brothers, sisters, and churches see this vision as well. *Perhaps God will put such a burden on your heart.*

Nonetheless, I am blessed to be in a place where I can minister the gospel, demonstrating what loving one’s neighbor looks like in an under-resourced neighborhood; to disciple a church to be a model of God’s kingdom; and, to be present in such a way to multiple opportunities for Hill men and women, Hill boys and girls, Hill teenagers to find eternal life *and* a new life in the Hill.

I am grateful that others give out of their own resources so that I am empowered to be a pastor in the Hill. If you’d like to know more how you can help, please email me at [ChipCPCtheHill@gmail.com](mailto:ChipCPCtheHill@gmail.com).

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**Ways to donate**—monthly payments or as one annual sum

- Checks: “CPC New Haven”/in memo “Hill/CA”/mail to: CPC New Haven, 135 Whitney Ave, New Haven, CT 06510
- Online at <http://www.cpcinthehill.org/> > Donate > Donation Applied > “Hill Church Planter—Rev. Chip Anderson”