



## Fourth Quarter 2022 Lightlines

### Building a Better World for Children - By Building Strong Fathers

by Pastor Eli Williams

Children and youth have been my passion since the beginning of my personal ministry in 1988. The labor of love on their behalf has been amazingly rewarding. I have the blessing of still being in a personal mentor/father-figure role with several of the males after all these years. Most now have children of their own, and they are excellent parents! Sadly, that is not the case with many fathers and mothers. One of the consequences is violent crime in our communities.

According to Detective Jordan of the Springfield Police, "The problem is with so many people and so many issues today, especially young people, out shooting people over disagreements." To help police departments fight violent crime, Ohio Governor DeWine has committed to distributing a total of \$200 million in grant money to law enforcement agencies around the state. "The vast majority of crime in this state is committed by repeat, violent offenders. We have to go after them and we have to prosecute them and we have to lock them up for a long, long time," DeWine said. This is not only a problem in Ohio but throughout the country and beyond.

Here is the thing, though. Throwing money at it will not solve the crisis. Arresting, prosecuting, and jailing criminals may help a little, but does nothing to turn off the pipeline that keeps pumping new offenders onto the streets. It never has, and never will. We must go upstream to the source of the supply of violent offenders and stop the flow there. The source of supply? The home. The place where values form, and where the character is developed. With less-than-ideal home lives, many of our community's youth - both boys and girls alike are in trouble, and they are making trouble for communities. They need fathers and mothers working together to raise them up right - the way the Creator intended. This is the mission of today's Urban Light Ministries.

As I shared in my 2016 book *Father Love - The Powerful Resource Every Child Needs*, I am grateful for my dad. He committed his life to faithfully loving his wife and children, even though his father had abandoned his family. Under very difficult circumstances, my father provided for 13 children, all the while serving his church as a deacon. Because of dad's example of healthy manhood, and the strong Christian fathering of his children despite not having had a good father, I believe in the potential of every man. He has been the inspiration for my work with dads since 2006, and for ULM's new ministry *Fathering Strong*.

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## 2022 Major Accomplishments

- YouVersion Devotional published with over 1000 completions
- *Fathering Strong* online community created and implemented with over 50 beta participants
- Dad's Discussion Groups grow with new facilitators trained
- Maintained GuideStar Platinum Credentials
- Awarded 25 fathers with "Good Dad" Awards
- Google ad grant managed adding over 100 new users
- Children's ministry partnership established
- Completion of updated research impact white-paper on effects of Father Absence on families and communities



## Operation Christmas Blessings

Imagine. Christmas is coming. The kids are excited. You have lost your home for some reason. You and your family are temporarily housed in a congregant shelter or a hotel room. Christmas is coming, and you should be shopping for gifts. You are working, but not making enough to afford rent and utilities. Christmas is coming. You are dreading facing your family on Christmas morning. Imagine.

It is heartbreaking for a homeless father or mother to have to face Christmas without the means to buy his or her children things the kids really need and want. A day that should be a joyous commemoration of our Messiah's first coming as a precious gift wrapped in swaddling cloths. Instead, there is only embarrassment, shame, and disappointment.

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**Urban Light Ministries**

**Tax ID: 31-1451586**

*Donations and inquiries may be sent to:  
PO BOX 3132, Springfield, OH 45501*

## Operation Christmas Blessings

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For the second Christmas season, Urban Light Ministries is providing a way for people of goodwill to help homeless families. Here is how it works. Register at our website to adopt a homeless family. You will receive the child(ren)'s wish list. On it will be the names, genders, ages, and sizes of the children. Purchase, wrap, and label the gifts. Deliver the gifts to Sheltered, Inc. ULM's Care-It's for Kids fund can reimburse you up to \$100 per child from the Jeff Wyler Charity Invitational Golf Scramble and other donations. You get to bless a family anonymously. Kids get a Christmas to remember. Dad and/or mom get to be the heroes. Family bonds are strengthened.

**Register to adopt a family today! [www.urbanlight.org](http://www.urbanlight.org)**

## Building Strong Fathers

(from page 1)

What is Fathering Strong? It is a new community where dads can share their stories, learn about effective parenting practices, and become stronger fathers by applying biblical principles. Our local group of fathers meets in person. These dads are receiving and giving encouragement, building bonds, discovering important resources, and preparing to lead their own groups. We are nearing the final stages of the development of the online Fathering Strong community that will be available to dads everywhere on the globe. We are endeavoring to build a better world for children by building strong fathers.

Our vision is that these men will grow as parents assured of the Word's promise: "Point your kids in the right direction — when they're old they won't be lost." — Prov. 22:6 MSG. In partnership with their children's mothers, they will model Christian manhood and help their kids develop godly character. Within this vision, pre-believing men will find Christ. Men who are new to the faith will find mentors and disciples. This is an effective way to reduce the number of delinquent youth, youth violent crime, child poverty, and so many other challenges: Help men become better fathers. Reach them where they are... On their smartphones. Before we have officially rolled it out, there are already 50-plus men on the waiting list for dad groups on the Fathering Strong website and app! We need your help.

As with everything worth doing, an investment is required to bring this vision to reality. Our team and partners have devoted a substantial amount of volunteer time, talent and treasure. We are asking you to consider supporting this work through a yearend gift, or an ongoing commitment in 2023. Your contribution will help us reach our goal of getting up and running with the full complement of resources for dads by early next year.

Your November or December gift of any amount will help us reach our yearend general fund goal of \$12,000. \$20 per month will help us provide in person, online and mobile services for fathers throughout 2021.

**Thank you for your partnership in this work.**



## Board Retreat Brings Time for Transition and Transformation

by Bruce Stapleton, Board Chairman

The Urban Light Ministries Board met in October for a time of reflection and confirmation. The purpose was to review the strategic direction of the ministry and through prayerful discernment, outline the plans for the upcoming year. The challenge is to leverage the deep and rich history of Urban Light Ministries while effectively transitioning and expanding the impact it can make on building stronger fathers for the benefit of their children, families, churches, and communities.

The consensus was to continue to focus the efforts on addressing the impact of father absence through biblically-based fatherhood programming. An updated research white paper was developed and published that supports the positive impact these programs can have. Three new initiatives addressing this objective include:

- Launching a new online fatherhood community called "Fathering Strong" in January – the website has been developed and already has over 50 fathers without an official launch
- Begin bringing communities of fathers and experts together through the release of a new podcast hosted by Pastor Eli with the official release in April
- Bring the community of fatherhood practitioners, program leaders, and fathers together through the offering of a live and virtual fatherhood conference that is planned for May.

The Sonshine Clubs and the work of enriching the lives of children through in-school children's ministries will transition through supporting and assisting the launch of LifeWise Academies which provide released time bible based character education to elementary-age youth during school hours.

The board retreat brought a sense of renewed direction that allows Urban Light Ministries to continue reaching more fathers and families. The direction is to focus resources on building the fatherhood initiatives and continue to support children's ministries through collaboration, not duplication. To review more details on the strategic direction of the ministry go to [www.urbanlight.org](http://www.urbanlight.org).

