

Press Release

For Immediate Release

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New Technology Gives the School of Urban Ministry a New Second Location

Since the Mission*Shift* School of Urban Ministry was founded fifteen years ago, the Twin Cities have changed a great deal. In 1995 less than 200,000 immigrants lived here, and most of them were concentrated in the core city. Today the Twin Cities have over 750,000 immigrants, living all over the metro. The 1950's suburbs, such as Richfield, Fridley, east Bloomington, Brooklyn Park and Maplewood are home to huge populations of people from around the globe. As the Baby Boomers have inherited their parents' homes, they have sold or rented them to immigrants, a pattern repeated all over America today. But far beyond this, large immigrant populations live all over the Twin Cities, even in sixth-ring suburbs.

Five years ago the Mission*Shift* School of Urban Ministry (SUM) investigated using two-way interactive video to create "satellite" sites around the Twin Cities. At that time the equipment cost would have been about \$100,000 on each end. "This year our tech people re-evaluated the situation and discovered that using standard computer equipment and the Internet, we could now do it for only \$5,000 of investment on each end. We saw this as a great opportunity to begin to train people who live in the suburbs, teaching them to build cross-cultural ministries right where they live," Says Rev. Roland Wells, of St. Paul's Ev. Lutheran Church, and Executive Director of SUM.

"Last fall we were contacted by Pastor Morris Vaagenes of Lutheran Church of the Master in Brooklyn Park about creating a branch of SUM in the northwest quadrant of the Twin Cities. For several months we have met with pastors and church staff in the area to plan the new site. Churches in Golden Valley, Brooklyn Center, Brooklyn Park, Maple Grove and Champlain have helped to create the new branch," Wells added. "Each branch will use its surrounding neighborhood as its laboratory, to study immigrant groups, social service providers, neighborhood history and demographics, all leading to the development of sharply-focused outreaches to specific immigrant communities' needs."

In both locations, SUM will meet on Monday night, the two locations connected by big-screen, real-time interactive video. SUM staff will lead each class, and each location will feature field trips, tours and interesting projects highlighting its own area. "We think this model is a great plus for our type of teaching," Wells said, "in that all of our content is live and locally-based. We use the leaders of the city to teach the city to the people of the city. Students get to meet immigrant leaders, non-profit directors and community innovators they will be working with in the future, and who can serve as resources for their congregation. We have begun discussions with a couple of congregations to add satellite sites like this in all five sectors of the Twin Cities in the next few years," Wells added.

Classes are Monday nights, 6:30-9:30 PM, starting on September 20. There are two semesters per year. Tuition is only \$150 per semester, and scholarships are available. Members of sponsoring churches in the NW quadrant get a special deal, paying only \$100 per semester. Classes end in mid-May. "We've now had over 400 people attend SUM, and our studies have shown that it creates a huge change in a person's sense of self and their ability to create and lead ministry. We teach people to creatively to into a situation and discover how God has prepared the situation to create an access point to build relationships and begin outreach," Wells said. "We have been quite surprised what a notable sense of self the year creates. Students continue to contact us for years afterwards, telling us of new outreaches they have created in their congregations and communities. It's a fun year of studies that makes people passionate about outreach."

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