UPLIFT 313 Pentecostal Life Article final

A Journey of Faith & Transformation

Three years ago, my husband and I, along with Sis Candise Hill were blessed with an opportunity to participate in an Urban Initiative program sponsored by North American Missions. This was an answer to prayer because, for many years, we had been seeking ways to reach families in Detroit with the Word of God. The burden for our city was heavy on our hearts, and this program opened a door for us to make a meaningful impact.

Through the Urban Initiative, we, along with participants from other urban areas (Los Angeles, Baltimore & Washington DC) experienced a profound paradigm shift in our thinking. With the backing of our District Superintendent Art Wilson, the district Board, our District NAM Director, Tim Richmond we began our journey. Scott Sistrunk challenged us to think outside the box to find ways to make a maximum impact in Detroit. Proverbs 11:30 says, "He that winneth souls is wise." We knew we needed wisdom from God to understand how to reach the unreached in our city effectively.

Under the leadership of Brother Philip Harding, we began brainstorming innovative ways to transform lives in a sustainable manner. We needed a shift in our thinking—not just a reworking of old strategies or plans to reach people, but a true transformation of our minds. Romans 12:2 reminds us, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." For too long, many in Detroit and other urban areas have gone unreached—not because the church lacks compassion, but because some of our traditional methods have not produced the lasting impact necessary for true, whole-life transformation.

Love - Listen - Learn

To better understand the needs and dreams of the community, we took the time to conduct interviews with people who reside in Detroit proper. We asked them, “How can we help? What do you need? What are your dreams?” One of the most profound responses came from a young man named Sean Tyus. He said, “We need people to stop looking down on us. We don’t need handouts; we need a hand-up.” His words echoed the heart of Galatians 6:2, which encourages us to "bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ."

That one statement became a guiding principle for our mission. We heard many responses asking for safe places for youth, resources to help find jobs, mentorship, partnerships for businesses, support for immigrants, music lessons, athletic activities, and more. From these needs, the idea for Urban Centers was born.

A Place of Hope

UPLIFT313 Community Center is the first Urban Center established from this vision. UPLIFT stands for Urban Programs for Livelihood, Innovation, and Financial Transformation. Our mission is to offer programs, create partnerships, build relationships, and come alongside people to minister to the whole person. Our goal at UPLIFT313 is to address the needs of the whole person, to accomplish progress in one's whole life, and ultimately in one's whole community. We aim to follow the example of Jesus. He met the physical needs of the people before addressing their spiritual needs (Matthew 14:13-21). We aim to do the same in Detroit. In response to the people we currently offer ESL classes and a Recovery program. In the fall of 2024 we will add Job skills training and music lessons for the youth.

UPLIFT313 also includes two self-sustaining businesses that help with program sustainability and serve as models for people to start their own enterprises: DropBox mattress company and Holy Smokes Barbecue & Catering. These businesses not only provide employment but also create opportunities for mentorship and personal growth.

Sean Tyus was one of the first participants in the Urban Initiative. He has engaged in mentorship, community gatherings, recovery programs, and business mentoring. As part of the Holy Smokes team, Sean has volunteered and worked as an employee, cooking for several district events and even the National Multicultural Ministry Summit in Detroit. He is a father of six beautiful children, whom he is raising on his own. Sean dreams of running his own barbecue business, and he is working hard to make this happen. Despite recent financial struggles, he continues to push forward, embodying the spirit of Philippians 4:13: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

When Sean is working the grill, he is more than just cooking; he is transforming his life and the lives of his children. As 1 Peter 4:10 says, "Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms." Sean is using his God-given talents to create a better life, not just for himself, but for his community.

The story of UPLIFT313 and Sean is just the beginning. It is a testimony of what God can do when we open our hearts and minds to new ways of reaching people in urban cities. The Urban Initiative has taught us that the work we do is not just about meeting needs, it's about transforming the person's whole life with love and the gospel. Through prayer, innovation, and a commitment to the mission, we are witnessing God's power at work in Detroit, Sean Tyus is one of many. UPLIFT313 is located at 5505 Michigan Ave, Detroit, MI 48210. This is the address of hope. To meet our team go to www.uplift313detroit.com.

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Updated 2026-08-25 08:58:41 UTC by Admin