

Vineyard Church Planting At Urbana 09

This past December a few of our Vineyard church planting warriors headed out during a Midwestern Christmas blizzard to represent Vineyard church planting at InterVarsity's mega missions conference Urbana 09. And what an incredible week it was.



Urbana 09 took place in St. Louis, MO, and hosted nearly sixteen thousand college students who were exploring God's call on their lives for ministry. It began Sunday night, December 27th and ended with a powerful communion service to welcome in the new year. In between there were numerous impacting speakers and more breakout sessions than you could shake a stick at.

Every afternoon in a trade-show type hall there were about 250 booths with representatives from various missions organizations and seminaries and Christian camps and...well you get the idea. It had been years since the Vineyard had been

represented at Urbana and since it takes place in the Midwest region, we just felt like we should be there.

We were able to secure some financing from the national church planting and ethnic diversity task forces, from a couple regional church planting task forces, as well as from the national office to pay the various expenses and to design and build a very nice trade-show type display.

The first day we had many of the IV folks coming up to our booth expressing gratitude for our being there. "We are so glad that the Vineyard is here..." and then they went on to tell us stories of being impacted by a specific Vineyard church or pastor. We were welcomed very well. There were also a few people who couldn't figure out what in the world Vineyard was doing there, as we were pretty much the only church or denomination represented. We just tried to help them see how healthy it is to get people involved in a local church once they come to Christ. Novel idea, I know!

Over the course of the first day we noticed that there was pretty much NO prayer ministry going on, at all, anywhere, and we decided to begin to ask every student that came by the booth how we could pray for them. It was wonderful. No one said no. We got to pray with over 350 students over the 5 days and I think we made some significant impact. For many students it was their first exposure to the Vineyard.

We experienced several occasions when the Holy Spirit powerfully showed up and began to speak to the folks we were praying for.

We also collected the contact information from these students and offered them several of the freebies we were handing out: past issues of Cutting Edge, copies of the ten years of our best articles, VBI brochures, A list of questions you might ask yourself to see if church planting is right for you, and a list of some of the best places to get some training in a local Vineyard church through an internship.



the **Vineyard** church

Love God. Love people. Period.

Time will tell, of course, how successful this venture was. Many of the students very well may go on to engage in God's kingdom in a call to ministry, or to be part of a team. Our hope and goal is that if even just few of them got connected up with a Vineyard church, it would be a win.

Our team did a great job, interacting with students hour after hour each day. Geno & Shannon Olson, Jay Pathak, Brenda Gatlin and our lovely Irish interns, Sammy & Edeanne Aiken, were wonderful at working the crowd, meeting loads of new folks and answering all kinds of questions and explaining all about the Vineyard and church planting. I think it stretched all of us a bit, may except for Jay, but we really got to connect with a lot of people.



So, for those of you who helped to fund this, thank you! There is no way it ever would have happened without your contributions. And if you are contacted by a student who was at Urbana and is interested in pursuing some more training or an internship, I encourage you to not let the opportunity slip by. Look for a way to rearrange your life and invite them in. I met one of my key staff pastors right after he attended Urbana about nine years ago. I created our first internship program to help train him and, well, the rest is history. He is a vital part of our staff and may one day go out to plant another Vineyard church.

If you have any questions, or would like to learn how to train these students, please don't hesitate to ask.

Let's plant lots of great healthy churches!
Michael Gatlin