



by Jennifer Hall

Reaching the city for Christ *outside of four walls*

Over 10 years ago, 2001 alumnus David Huskisson, native of Barbados, began the ethnically diverse Solid Rock Assembly of God in center-city Springfield, Missouri. The range of diversity varies from Caucasians, to African Americans, to Hispanics, to Samoans and continental Africans.

"I didn't have a plan," Huskisson said about starting the church. "I just had a call. I didn't have a church planting formula, but I knew how to have 'church.' I just jumped into it." Huskisson held the first service in a house with 15 people on April 1, 1989.

Eventually, the small congregation built their own building and grew to 30 attendees. After a while, it became apparent to Huskisson that the church had reached a plateau. "We were trying to do what a mature church does, but without a clear purpose, it

was difficult." The church was content, but it wasn't growing or impacting the community around it. "I felt like there had to be more," Huskisson said.

Huskisson took a class on urban ministry and eventually enrolled at AGTS. He wanted answers to his questions about ministry, namely, how to make his church grow. While attending AGTS, Huskisson participated in a church planting boot camp. He left with a redirected approach to ministry. "I followed the pattern that every one else had used," he said. His attempt to force the church to be "normal" was keeping it from fulfilling God's unique purpose for the neighboring area. Solid Rock was to play a distinctive role in the spiritual and physical life of its surrounding community.

The church serves as a uniting element among the various races to whom it ministers. "We try to make the church inviting to all races and socioeconomic statuses," said Huskisson. "We are purposeful about emphasizing our diversity."

The church took on a unique role in the development of center-city Springfield. Huskisson is the vice president of the Ministers' Coalition of Springfield, made up primarily of black pastors who are involved in social issues. The group helps to educate people about AIDS. They hold community fairs that offer free health screenings as well as employment information.

Huskisson is also involved in the Sherman Ave. Project that purchases and rehabilitates substandard housing in the church's neighborhood and rents them as subsidized housing.

He is working to establish a Community Development Corporation that would coordinate with his church to develop and test community-based ini-



The Huskisson family participates in community outreaches at Solid Rock Assembly of God. Clockwise from left: Jonathan, David, Marilyn, David Jr., Tina, Timothy, and Anna Marie.

tiatives and approaches that can be models for urban revitalization. Solid Rock's holistic approach includes, but is not limited to: drug counseling, treatment and prevention; creating jobs and affordable housing; reducing homelessness and providing support services to families at risk.

The congregation impacts their community by such things as delivering groceries door-to-door, and assisting families in need. On Halloween night, Solid Rock and the Springfield Park Board cosponsored a carnival with games, clowns, puppets, and a live band. "We are trying to share the light of Christ. We want to bring the church closer to the people. We don't want to be a cloistered group."

"At AGTS I was in president Byron Klaus' spiritual formation class. He pushed me outside the four walls of the church and helped me understand that the minister has a place in social action. I've begun to be a part of the community. We are looking for new ways to minister."

Klaus said, "David has committed himself to the center of Springfield for the long-haul. He has stuck it out through thick and thin and is now accepted by the community. He has a vision to serve the community in the broadest sense at the point of their most significant felt needs." 

