

Starting small, praising big

The beginnings of Mustard Seed

When I entered Carleton College as a freshman in the fall of 2000, I had been a Christian but 18 months. I had heard rumors that Carleton was a hard place to be a Christian. This didn't faze me because like all Carleton students, I was ready for the challenge. More importantly, I was confident that God was with me and that the next four years would be spiritually transformative.

One initial confirmation God gave me was finding out that my freshman roommate, Ingrid (Lindstrom) Henry '04, was a new Christian. If there were only two Christians at Carleton, we had already found each other!

During the first few months of freshman year, Ingrid and I began to connect with more students, many of them also freshmen, who professed a committed Christian faith. We began to dream about the potential for the future of this community of believers, which seemed to be "underground" at this time. Ingrid often talked about her desire to start a worship band on campus, having played saxophone for her church's worship band. Two other freshmen Christians, violin and guitar players, echoed this prayer.

Several of us coordinated a wor-

ship night in Carleton's Great Hall at the end of winter term. Selah, St. Olaf's recently formed worship band, led worship for busloads of Oles and, as we had hoped, a good handful of Carls. That night, we who from the east side of campus had been dreaming about a campus worship ministry, met another small group of like-minded Christian freshmen from the west side. We discovered two more guys and two girls who were eager to share their gifts of guitar, drums and voice in a student-led worship band. What a high we all experienced that night!

I went home over spring break to learn the electric bass, filled with anticipation of what was going to come.

When we all returned spring term for our first band meeting in the chapel, the eight of us who met at the worship service had already grown to ten—one lone senior brought his guitar, and another freshman filled the role of bass player (which I appreciated because I hadn't mastered the bass in the previous two weeks, and the piano was a better fit for me anyway).

We called ourselves "Mustard Seed," something that started small but would grow like a weed into something big. I cannot deny that some of our early

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services were sparsely attended, that those on stage sometimes outnumbered those in the crowd. There was probably one night when we joyfully played for our sound guy.

But the simple fact that we had found each other, a small team of similarly minded Christians, most of us in our first year at Carleton, was testimony in itself.

When many of the original members of Mustard Seed graduated in 2004, the ministry was still going strong, and I smile every time someone reminds me that it still exists today. When I think about my time at Carleton, many of my fondest memories are connected with Mustard Seed. I still carry what I learned from my time with Mustard Seed: that God goes with us and does not forsake us, that small beginnings must never be despised and that it truly is good when God's people live together in community. ♦

Christine (Collins) Papai '04 currently lives in Minneapolis, MN. She works as quality manager for the international food relief nonprofit Feed My Starving Children. She is married to Sam Papai '06, a former bass player for Mustard Seed.



Photos from above, clockwise: The original Mustard Seed band included nine first-years and one senior; each year new sound techs are trained in; Josh Yeoh '07, center, led Mustard Seed during his years at Carleton and then stayed for a year to minister nearly full time to students in a variety of prayer and worship settings (see article by Josh Yeoh); each term Mustard Seed hosts a Sunday-evening service in Skinner Chapel in lieu of that week's Monday night worship service; some years, Mustard Seed band involves nearly two dozen students. The band played for eight years at the Cave.

