

THE OLIVE BRANCH



CHARIS OF MINNESOTA INCORPORATED

A Message from the President: Bob Olson

The purpose of Charis of Minnesota is to present God's reconciling love in Jesus Christ to inmates in correctional institutions.

We held a Board retreat on Saturday, May 19, 2007. We spent a very productive time together, discussing our mission, purpose, strategies and vision. We realize, as a Board, more work needs to be done in all these areas. We will be taking action on the mission statement and our purpose in the near future. We will be reaching out to other Cursillo-type organizations and various Christian ministries to suggest partnering together to build stronger ministries.

As Board members, we have been approached by individuals asking Charis to establish a mentoring program. One outcome of our retreat, after focusing on the mission statement, was to decide that one-on-one mentoring really did not fit with our stated mission.

The Federal Bureau of Prisons is very clear about contact after release—they are against it. A volunteer who breaks their rule will be banned from working in federal prisons.

Recently lines were unintentionally crossed, by well-meaning individuals of this ministry, that were in violation of Bureau of Prison rules. Fortunately, we responded quickly and were able to address these incidents to the satisfaction of Bureau officials.

We feel there are other ministries providing good mentoring to our brothers and sisters once they are released. (See Page 2). As a Board, we will continue to develop our post-release contact policy.

I'd like to share a "God-Sighting" with you. We were blessed by a donation of \$1,000, given by a couple "surfing the web." They wanted to give their money to a Christian prison ministry, saw our website, and decided it was a good fit. They had only one condition - that we not put their names on our mailing list. PTL!!

Please join me in thanking the departing Board members for their dedicated service to the Charis ministry: Cindy Blomgren, Jim Buelow, Dick LaSell and Satoru Sudoh. May God bless you and keep you as you continue on your journey serving Him!

2007/2008

Board of Directors

Dean Allen

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Fruit of the Ministry: Pastor Dave Hibbison

Only God could have known and orchestrated that twelve years after an arrest for bank robbery I would become a Pastor to a Discipleship Re-entry ministry. Flashback to July 1994 and you would see a man sitting in a county jail, reading a small Gideon New Testament. A few days later he gave his life to Jesus through the help of a volunteer chaplain. Then in October of 1995 you'd see this man attending a Charis weekend which would impact his life forever!

After being released from the "University" of Sandstone, God provided the opportunities to acquire an Associate Degree in business, a Bachelor's Degree in ministry from Northwestern College in St. Paul, and ordination through a non-denominational ministry. Other blessings after release include a new Christian wife, reconciliation with my children, a child born to my new marriage, and volunteer opportunities to further the Kingdom.

Because of the love and support received from the Charis ministry, I overcame many of the obstacles a young believer faces. I have had the privilege of speaking to over 4,000 people in these past eight years about the power of the Gospel and those who live it out!

I have also had the opportunity to serve with other Charis members such as at the Alpha Course at Damascus Way, encouraging men on the last evening of the course who are on the verge of being released back into society. I had the honor of doing a team send off last fall for the Faribault team. I plan to serve this year as Spiritual Director on the team.

Much of the time we don't get to see the fruit of our ministries, but I want to remind everyone that God's word (and service) does not return void! I am an example of the fruit of the Charis ministry, and like a seed in the hand of the Holy Spirit, it can produce 30, 60, 100 times more, resulting in many more lives being touched!

Having heard the call two years ago, I founded Creation in Christ Ministry. CCM seeks to "serve Christ by serving others" and focuses on three areas. First: Discipleship re-entry help to those coming out of incarceration, treatment programs, halfway houses, and the like. Second: Pastoral counseling to anyone in need of Christian support, and third: Worship based prayer. Thus far CCM has been involved primarily in the Discipleship Re-entry area. We try to meet

the physical needs of those in transition (MT. 25:24-30 ... Whatever you do for the least of these) but with an emphasis on discipleship (MT. 28: 18-20 ... Go and make disciples). We currently lease an efficiency apartment in Monticello MN to house one person, and are looking to expand to a facility that would house up to eight men. We would train and equip these men to go on to oversee their own discipleship houses, thus reaching many more for the Kingdom.

I continue to look to Jesus for His direction and support. CCM needs prayer more than anything. We also can use gas cards, grocery store gift cards (Cub, Coborns, etc.) as well as retail gift cards (Target, Wal-Mart, etc.). Of course we need financial support, so we are trusting Him for all the resources we need to make this much needed ministry effective. If you would like to know more about Creation in Christ Ministry, please contact me at:

612-501-1384 or email address creationinchrist@comcast.net,

or PO Box 456,

Clearwater, MN, 55320.

May the Lord bless you as you continue to bless others.

Lifting you up in prayer,

Rev. David Hibbison

Weekend Report: MCF Shakopee, Lee Peterson

Another “Best Charis Weekend Ever” occurred at Shakopee Women’s Prison in April 2007. Of course that doesn’t surprise me—it just confirms that God is who He says He is. Our Bible verse for the weekend was Deuteronomy 31:8: *“The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; He will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.”* I quoted that verse many times before the weekend, often out loud, to hear those promises. And I was not disappointed. The Lord did indeed go before us into that prison.

In preparation, leadership interviewed 35 women who registered to serve on the inside team. We found it interesting that most of them wanted to be on the Palanca team. They wanted to learn to pray out loud, because one woman on a previous team had shared her excitement in learning how to pray. The 21 inmates chosen to serve were a delight. They wanted to share what they’d previously received and were indeed examples of servants of Christ. Most had never been on a team before, and their excitement was contagious.

As the weekend approached I clung to the part of the verse that said, *“Do not be afraid; do*

not be discouraged.” Feeling covered in prayer, I was eager to finally meet the women we had been praying for. Looking into their faces, you could see hurt, anxiety, attitude, and doubt. Yet there were smiles, and a calm assurance that the Holy Spirit was in that room at that very time.

The transformation that happens on a weekend is an awesome experience. The Charis motto of “Listen, Listen, Love, Love” allows a volunteer to rest in the fact that they are not in control, and opens eyes and hearts to absorb the blessings that God has in store. The sharing at the Poster Party is a pretty good indicator on Friday night as to how well God’s message is understood. On this evening we heard mini-talks, condensing what they had heard into a couple paragraphs. Each table group shared articulately and enthusiastically. Amazing!

Saturday scheduling provided challenges as we experienced prison interruptions and delays, but evidence of God’s grace and His Spirit was apparent in the sharing during Chapel visits; in witnessing the awe of the guests to the Agape Dinner; and the reverence and tears that flowed during the Forgiveness Service. Lives were obviously

being touched, both from insiders and outsiders.

The feeling in the Community Room on Sunday morning was now a sense of comfort and trust. The talks we heard all weekend wove together as though God-designed. Bible verses were often re-stated enforcing God’s love, forgiveness and encouragement. This all culminated with most of the women sharing from their heart at the closing. Their words expressed optimism and hope as they faced their days ahead.

One very important presence in our weekend was Chaplin Dave Berg. He checked in often to see how we were doing or if there were any problems. We enjoyed the interactions and so appreciated his assistance. He also spoke to the women at the closing, reminding them that if they get discouraged, to look in the mirror and see the woman created and loved by God.

What a blessing it was to be a part of this weekend designed and led by God. Indeed, I think that could be what we all experience. When we see how God has gone before us to prepare the way, we realize how much He loves each one of us, and in turn, we give Him all the glory, honor and praise!!

Charis of Minnesota Incorporated

P.O. Box 102

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CHARIS OF MINNESOTA INCORPORATED

Charis Board of Directors
Officers

The following people were elected as officers of the Charis Board of Directors:

President: Bob Olson

Vice President: Steve Ricker

Treasurer: Bruce Kemper

Secretary: Maret Ryan

Help Wanted:
Board of Directors

Interested in serving on the Board of Directors, but hesitant about the three year term? Resignations have caused two 1-year terms to become available. This is your chance to get a "taste" of what it's like to serve. If you would like to be considered, please contact Bob Olson at 952-431-7968 or email him at Olsons@charter.net

Upcoming Weekends

MCF Shakopee: Oct. 18-21.
Lay Director: Barb Dickie

MCF Faribault: Oct. 19-21.
Lay Director: Paul Schwamb

FCI Sandstone: Oct. 5-8
Lay Director: Jerry Janiak

FMC Rochester: Oct. 5-8
Lay Director: Glenn Springer