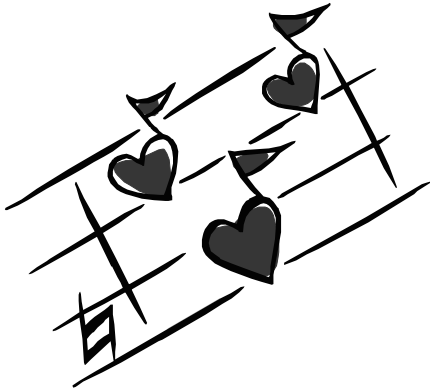


THE OLIVE BRANCH



CHARIS OF MINNESOTA INCORPORATED

Letter from the President: Bob Olson



God sent His son, they called Him Jesus;
 He came to love, heal and forgive;
 He lived and died to buy my pardon;
 An empty grave is there to prove my Savior lives!

Because He lives, I can face tomorrow;
 Because He lives, all fear is gone;
 Because I know He holds the future,
 And life is worth the living,
 Just because He lives!

This song, with words and music by William J. Gaither, is one we sang on the first Charis team I served on and it remains one of my all-time favorites. This is the good news we just celebrated on Easter and continues to be, I believe, the foundation for our Charis Ministry.

So we have stopped evaluating others by what the world thinks about them. Once I mistakenly thought of Christ that way, as though He were merely a human being. How differently I think about Him now! What this means is that those who become Christians become new persons. They are not the same anymore, for the old life is gone. A new life has begun! II Corinthians 5:16-17 .. Wow, what a wonderful thing to celebrate and share with our incarcerated brothers and sisters!

As I am writing this, the snow has disappeared, the grass is getting green and plants are starting to break through the soil; things are changing and new life is beginning. Some changes are happening with the Charis Ministry also. After prayer and conversation with those of you who have faithfully served at Rush City, the Board has decided to withdraw from that institution. Thank you volunteers for your dedication and faithful service!

Under the direction of Maret Ryan, two new documents have been recently produced: Day Zero Training for new Lay Directors and Table Leader Guidelines for outside table leaders. Maret is concluding her six year term on the board; thank you Maret for your never-ending energy and dedicated service to Christ and the Charis community! Martin Johnson has chosen to resign from the board due to time constraints; thank you also. Thanks to all of you for allowing me to serve the past six years; it has been a blessing and a joy. Obviously we will have some board positions to fill so please prayerfully consider if God may be calling you to serve on the Charis Board. If that is true and you have any questions, please call Steve Ricker at 952-475-0228.

Responsibilities of a Board Member

June is the time for electing new members to the Charis Board of Directors. But just what does the Charis Board do, anyway? In a nutshell; it's a lot. But the beauty of membership is that you have a whole team of 15 members to help you get acclimated and who help carry the load.

Possibly the most important responsibility of a Board member is one of listening to and discerning the leading of the Holy Spirit. In all our actions and activities we try to first and foremost pray about where God is leading each one of us and the Charis ministry.

Because you see, first and foremost, Charis is a ministry. The Charis Board takes to heart the gospel promptings found in Matthew 25:36, *"I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me."* In all we do, we attempt to keep this simple but profound message before us and remember who we are ministering to and why.

The power of Charis rests in knowing that the small group that we formed in our own walk transcends into a walk of 15 people as all put aside differences and focus on where God is leading. The model we proclaim on our weekend strengthens us. We, the Board, become one more prayer and share group, attempting to live out the Gospel message in the company of fellow pilgrims.

A typical Board member carries one or two assignments, depending on the interests and strengths each person brings to the Board. From institution liaisons to coordinating supplies to writing the Charis newsletter, there's a job and a gift for everyone. Please think about whether you are being led to join the Charis Board of Directors. A thankful heart, an open mind, and a willingness to do the work of the ministry is all that is needed.

Responsibilities of Team Membership

"How can I get the veteran team members to come to all the team meetings?"

"Can't the Board make attending team meetings a requirement for all team members?"

These are just a couple of the frustrations expressed by recent Lay Directors. While they appreciate all the efforts of veteran team members, Lay Directors face a unique challenge when it comes to motivating these veterans to attend **ALL** the team meetings. The simple response is that this is already a requirement.

The primary focus of team meetings is to build a group 25-30 individuals into one united group, who then go into the prison, knowing with confidence they have become one body in Christ, now able to do the work for which they were called. Becoming a united body only happens when team members make an intentional effort to get to know one another on a more intimate level and that includes making a commitment to attend all the team meetings.

Meetings also prepare us spiritually for the weekend, with prayer the foundation of the Charis experience. Team meetings give us all the opportunity to pray with and for each other, to ask God to tear down roadblocks and obstacles that may stand in our way, and to build each other up as brothers and sisters in Christ.

It takes effort and time to get prepared, but doing so means that the work we accomplish on the weekend is both powered and empowered by God's Holy Spirit. Attending all the team meetings helps us set aside our own cares, our own agendas and stay focused on our mission—make a friend, be a friend, bring that friend to Christ.

Looking For a Few Good People:

The Charis Board of Directors is seeking candidates to serve on the board with each director serving a three-year term. We currently have five positions open, with two Board members running for re-election. Meetings are held on the third Thursday of each month, from 6:30-8:30 PM at Colonial Church of Edina. New members should be prepared to actively serve on a sub-committee as well as attend annual retreats. The new term of office takes place in July. If you are interested, please call Steve Ricker at 952-475-0228 or email him at rekcir7@hotmail.com.



Threshold: helping after incarceration

Recently the Board was visited by Bruce Fenner of the Federal Bureau of Prisons who came to talk about a program being started to assist those who are incarcerated once they are released from prison. The overarching goal of the program is to set up a national network of trained mentors who would be available to work with an inmate after release. Mentors would form groups of at least six people, take a training course and then work one-on-one to help an individual reintegrate into society. The Board is trying to determine whether and/or how to interface with this program, either as a bridge to other organizations and churches or to simply publicize the need for mentors. Interested groups can learn more about the Threshold program through a video on the BOP website, www.bop.gov. Board member Terry Christian can also be a resource for further information. His email link is posted on the Charis website, www.charismn.com.

Kairos Outside:

Great news! Kairos Outside is coming to Minnesota! By the time you read this there will have already been one formation meeting about this wonderful new ministry, but there's still time to be a part of it. Kairos Outside is a component of the national prison ministry, Kairos Prison Ministry International. Loosely modeled on a Cursillo weekend, it is designed to support the families of men and women who are, or have been incarcerated. The spouses, parents, other relatives and friends of the incarcerated often find time right along with their relatives or friends. It is important for them to know they are not alone and that there is a Christian Community that cares about them. Please go to the Kairos website to learn more about it, www.kairosprisonministry.org. To be a part of the Minnesota experience contact Faith Rynders at faithryndersmn@aol.com or 763-232-6850.

Donations for Tables:

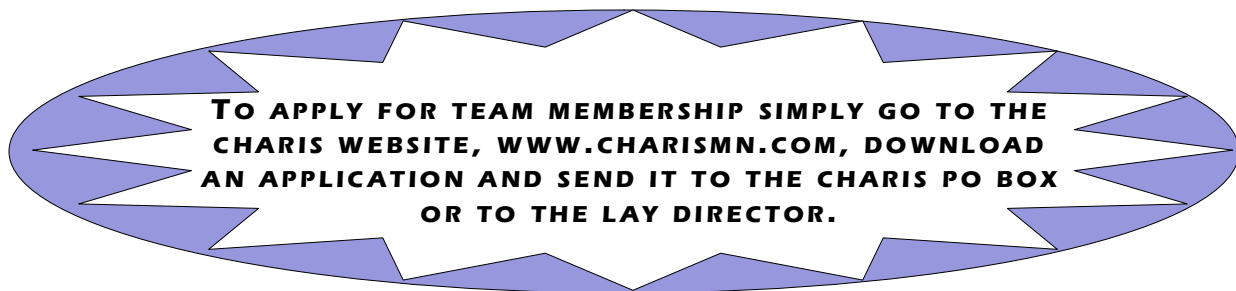
The Charis Board of Directors has approved the purchase of eight tables to be used at MCF Faribault for the religious programs. If you would be willing to help defray the cost of these tables, please send a donation to Charis of MN, Inc, P.O. Box 102, Hopkins, MN 55343. The tables are expected to cost approximately \$1,200. Thank you for your generosity.

Return Address:

Charis of Minnesota Incorporated

P.O. Box 102

Hopkins, MN 55343



CHARIS OF MINNESOTA INCORPORATED

I Always Thought I Was a Good Christian

I always thought that I was a good Christian until I attended and participated in the Charis retreat; it was then that I found out what it meant to be a good Christian. I learned the true concept of unconditional love and commitment. Those traits have turned my life into one of success both financially and emotionally. I became a good supervisor due to the fact that I was less judgmental and more willing to listen to my employees.

I spent five years at Shakopee and thirty months on probation here in New York, where I was from. During that 5 years it was the Charis family that held me up and encouraged me that I could do it. When I prepared to be discharged it was the Charis community that screamed in praise the loudest.

I have not stayed in contact with the wonderful strangers that changed my life forever, but somehow I think if someone were to tell them that I was thinking of them and grateful to them they would understand why I have kept busy putting my life back together.

Please tell the women at Shakopee that when you go outside of the prison walls there really is a lot of love. I will say special prayers for each and everyone of the women inside and the Charis team. After all, my team on the inside was Palanca.