

The Sharing Org

Ministry to the Nursing Care Community

AUGUST 2008

Dear Prayer,

I pray that you and yours are doing well. I pray for you and all of the Prayer Partners often and ask our God to open your eyes to His many methods of grace and love to you in your daily life. Just the other day the Lord allowed me to see His great love for me in such a little thing as a coloring book picture that one of the residents that I serve gave me as an expression of affection and gratitude. I so treasure the little things – *when I actually notice them for what they are.*

I have been working a lot this year on organizing the 100 Shoeboxes for 100 Residents program. Everything is going well. I just began asking certain church groups to consider putting teams together to assist with a few of the facilities that are too large for me to manage myself. Please pray that I will get the response that God knows that I need. Thank you for all of your prayers and/or financial contributions to this year's shoebox effort. **Please pray** that as we enter these last couple of months (before we meet with the residents in October to fill the shoeboxes) that all the final details will come about and the loose ends will be adequately tied off.

July 13th was yje one-year anniversary since I went in for surgery on my knee. This anniversary is bitter-sweet for me in that while I am uninsured and got caught with the brunt of the medical bills, I really realized God's care for me and my family through our Prayer Partners. I remember the cards, the phone calls, the visits, and the gifts of food and money. I remember that even though I was laid up for 3 ½ months and could not do services at that time that you did not stop praying or sending your monthly support. You sustained my family. It is because of you that I can actually celebrate that tough time in our lives. Thank you.

I don't know if you realize how important you are to our work as one of our Prayer Partners. E.M. Bounds wrote "*Only praying hearts will build God's kingdom. Only praying hands will put the crown on the Savior's head.*" As simple as these words are, I believe them for I have seen God do some pretty amazing things in response to prayer. I anticipate the future as I trust that our God will do mighty things in and through us as we continue the effort to serve those who really are unable to do for themselves in the care facilities. **Please continue to pray** and ask God to do a special thing in the minds and the hearts of the men and women that I serve. For I don't want my time with them to be just another *group activity* but rather a very real time of worship that *communicates Jesus' love to them as individuals.*

This past month I was able to share with the residents the 10 Commandments afresh. How our Lord said to us that all of the Law and the Prophets were covered by His two commands to love God and love our neighbor. I shared how the 10 Commandments actually become obsolete if we would just observe Jesus' words. For we could not possibly "murder" our neighbor if we were "loving" our neighbor. Or that we could not "falsely testify" about our neighbor if we were "loving" our neighbor. For many of the residents, this concept seemed to turn life around and away from a great big list of "Don't Do's" and into a simplified single "Do". **Please pray** that the residents will learn to love their house mates as I see many of them frustrated and resentful toward one another – like siblings who bicker.

Finally, I have posted the 2008 Mid-Year financial reports on the Sharing Org website. Please look over the reports and see just how God has been answering our prayers and sustaining our work.

As I close, I pray that you will be able to get out and enjoy the rest of the summer as fall is quickly approaching. Our God has created the intricacy of every flower's petal and every leaf's vein and we can never discover those small details if we don't make the time to simply smell the roses.

May God bless your life,
John

www.thesharing.org

PO Box 73 · Armada, MI 48005 · (586) 949-6885

It is the MISSION of the Sharing Org to share the love of God and to build relationships with residents of care facilities by providing them with weekly interdenominational Christian worship services.

I would like to partner with the Sharing Org and serve the residents of care facilities by giving them the love of God through the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

I would like to partner with the Sharing Org by making a **monthly contribution** of: \$50.00 \$25.00 \$15.00 **\$8.00 for 2008** \$_____ Other

I would like to support the Sharing Org by making a **one time donation** of: \$500.00 \$250.00 \$100.00 \$75.00 \$_____ Other

#0607030.5

Prayer Partner

12345 Anywhere St.

Your Town, MI 48---

Thank you for partnering with us as together we share the Love of God with the residents of care facilities.

You've pledged \$0 per month to support the Sharing Org.

Your gifts for 2008 have totaled \$30

Please make checks payable to: **The Sharing Org**

Please mail to: PO Box 73

Armada, MI 48005

Ministry Moments

In January of 2006 I began writing a correspondence series titled *Ministry Moments* for the monthly supporters of the Sharing Org. In Ministry Moments I highlighted key moments that happened in the ministry and my own reactions to those moments. I've since received so many positive comments concerning that series that I have decided to begin adding it to each newsletter. These Ministry Moments that I share are my most personal thoughts about what I've experienced in the previous month. My words are not always flowery or politically correct but they come straight from the heart – the heart that is ever being challenged and changed by our God who seems to surprise me every time I turn around.

AUGUST 2008

Gina approached me before a service one day and she asked me if I would “bless” her necklace.

Have you ever had one of those moments when everything came screeching to a halt? At that moment everything came to a halt for me – *complete with the sound of a record album being scratched off in my head.*

“Bless your necklace?” I asked in order to buy myself some time to process the request. Calmly and respectfully I said, “I don't ‘bless’ things, I don't know how.”

“Its easy,” replied Gina. “Just make the sign of the cross over it and say 'In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit'.”

It is times like these that I really feel stuck. My theological disposition is to shy away from any form of mysticism and yet for many of the people that I serve, mysticism is a very real part of their ability to worship - to feel connected to God. If I am to serve the many variants of Christian traditions among the residents I serve, then I have to be open to doing some things that I don't quite understand, right? However, I also need to stay true to the convictions of the Holy Spirit in my heart and not attribute to God the many religious and meaningless motions that we humans have a knack for concocting and doing. Oh, what to do, what to do?

Fine. As I made the sign of the cross and said “In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Amen” it was finished. As I cringed at my actions I watched as Gina walked away fully comforted and contented with the cross that she wore around her neck. I imagined that the cross had a more special meaning for her now and that she somehow felt closer to God because of it. As she suffers from mental illness, I know that I played into her illness, but her illness is her reality, the only reality that she knows. What use would I be if I would not meet her where she was and comfort her there? The song “Just As I Am” rang very true for me as we sang it that morning.

The following week Gina came to me and asked me to bless a ring that she wore. As I geared up to wave my hand and utter my words, she added, “In the name of Janis?” (Janis Joplin is her favorite musical artist.) At this I kindly told her “No,” that I would not do that.

I can justify some things, but this is not one of them. Sometimes this work really leaves me wondering about myself.

~ John