

WE'RE MAKING A DIFFERENCE!

As you may remember, I represented our church at the national annual gathering of the Alliance last month—the wonderfully progressive organization with which our church primarily is affiliated. Many noteworthy events took place during that week-end of seminars, worship services, presentations, updates on scientific and other relevant research, discussion groups and other opportunities; but one event *particularly* was outstanding: It was a filmed presentation of much of the work at the Alliance during the past year.

Included in the aforementioned presentation was the account of a man who had made a six-figure salary from a corporation but had been laid off as a result of the economic downturn. Essentially, he lost everything he had: his comfortable home, his money, even his family. Things became so bad for him that he literally had no place to lay his head and almost nothing to keep him warm on bitterly cold nights when he slept in open air under viaducts. As sometimes happens in such circumstances, he turned to alcohol and drugs to dull his pain. He became an addict, and his health, along with the rest of his life, ended up on the garbage dump.

One day, the man's daughter found him near death, lying on the dirty floor of an abandoned warehouse. Immediately, he was rushed to a nearby hospital that was able to keep him alive and, over time, to stabilize him. Eventually, when he was released from the medical facility, he was referred to the Oakhurst Rehabilitation Program in Atlanta that is helped by contributions from our group—the Alliance. There, he received food, shelter, medical care, ongoing treatment for his addiction, and a variety of other services. For him, that experience was a life-saver. With help, he was able to triumph over his situation, completed the program and, in addition to successfully obtaining minimum-wage employment, continued his association with rehabilitation efforts at his facility by becoming a deeply valued volunteer, attempting to help others as *he* had been helped. “You can't just take

without giving back,” he said. So he donated virtually all of his free time to be of assistance there.

But here is the most *amazing* part of the story. After several years of work as an outstanding, highly effective volunteer, he was invited to become the Residential House Manager, a job that he accepted. Eventually, after extremely exemplary service, he actually was offered a position as the organization’s Executive Director, a job he has been filling with distinction. To watch that man on film telling his story and showing him at work was a heart-warming experience. It lets us know that, even as a small fellowship, we at CCM are having an important part in a deeply meaningful endeavor to help others through our meager but extremely valuable contribution to the Alliance. And the rehabilitation program to which I’ve referred is only *one* of the Alliance’s significant ministries.

As I think about the experience of our helping to reach out and give a hand up in a *literally* life-saving way for one of “the least of these” to whom Jesus referred, I am reminded of the story of Martin of Tours.

Martin was a Roman soldier who was converted to Christianity after encountering a beggar on the street who needed clothing. We’re told that Martin cut his military cloak in half and gave one half of it to the beggar to help keep him warm in the freezing weather. Later that evening, Martin had a dream in which Christ appeared to him—wearing *his cloak*. He was so moved by that experience that it led to his conversion.

“If you have done it to the least of these (in the world’s eyes), you have done it to me.” Those words of Jesus remind us that, even as a *small* fellowship, we are engaged in a mission that is much *larger* than we—one that is life-altering significant!

I am thankful to be a part of the national life-altering fellowship of the Alliance, and I am grateful to be a part of the powerfully vital fellowship that *we* experience together at CCM. May we never forget: We’re not *just*

“going to church” here. We’re *making a difference!* I felt that you would want to know.

As always, remember that I love and believe in you!

Your pastor and friend,

John

OPEN DOORS OF OPPORTUNITY

Sunday, May 10 – PARENTS’ DAY (Second Sunday of the Month)

10:00 a.m. WORSHIP SERVICES

The word “worship,” we’re told, is derived from a root that means “declaring the worth or value of something.” (Worship *originally* was called “*worthship*.” So we’ll be declaring the value of good parents today, but we *also* will be including individuals who may *not* have children of their own. So John’s message will be, “HOW TO BE A BETTER PARENT, GRANDPARENT AND *PERSON*.” If you’ve been a parent or if you’ve ever *had* a parent or guardian, this sermon is for you! Also, if you’ve never had a child but you have *been* a child, this message will be for you! (Guess that pretty much takes us *all* in, huh?)

Since we traditionally do not have our discussion group following worship on Mothers’ Day (*Parents’ Day* at CCM!), we’ll get out *early* today—by 11:30 a.m. or before.

Sunday, May 17 (Third Sunday of the Month)

10:00 a.m. “THE ANTIDOTE TO LONELINESS”

It is ironic that the chapter we discussed last week (in the book, *Hungers of the Heart*), focused on our need for meaningful relationships, because our theme for today highlights positive ways of dealing with loneliness—a reality that all of us have experienced at *some* time in life and may experience currently. Did you know that meditation can help us to respond *constructively* to that reality? We’ll be talking about that possibility today. Out by about 11:30 a.m.

Sunday, May 24 (Fourth Sunday of the Month)

10:00 a.m. “OUR HUNGER FOR A BETTER WORLD”

All one has to do to motivate our wishing for a better world is to read almost any newspaper or listen to the evening news on TV. But the most *powerful* impetus for desiring a better world occurs when we have experienced hurt at the hands of someone else—and we all know that such experiences happen to everyone. We’ll look at that reality today and the fact that we cannot contribute to the repair of the world without, at the same time, contributing to a better life for ourselves. (If you’re reading the book, *Hungers of the Heart*, we’ll begin an exploration of Chapter 4.) Out by about 11:30 a.m.

After the Lunch Bunch gathers for a tasty bite to eat, those who want to help make a significant contribution to others will have an opportunity to visit Twilight Adult Residential Care to take snacks and to let a group of oft-forgotten people know that we care enough to spend a little qualitative time with them. Do *you* have 30 to 45 minutes to make a difference in someone’s life? If so, please, join us for this significant ministry!