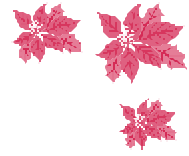




Bright Horizons



Rev. Bruce Hitchcock, Executive Director

Angie Brown, Newsletter Editor

The Renewed Meaning of Christmas

As a Pastor, I used to prepare for every Advent and Christmas by reading the beginning of each of the four Gospels. I missed that. So I read the beginning of the four Gospels in preparation for this story. Matthew begins with a genealogy of Jesus, the Messiah. It continues echoing the Old Testament with the story of Joseph a dreamer and Mary. Mark is the minimalist among the Gospels. The stories are brief and to the point. Mark's Christmas is so brief that nothing is really said. Mark begins with the Baptist's preaching and Jesus coming for baptism. Mark jumps to Epiphany. When I began reading Luke, the words poured out of my mouth in the King James Versions. I did not know that I had this committed to memory. It was like greeting an old friend after a long period of time apart. Reading Luke was a touchstone of joy. John, ever the theologian, set my mind to contemplation.

John 1:1 has stuck in my mind and heart these past few days. My translation of these words is "He came to his own home, but his own people did not receive him." The sadness of this verse is that this is not only the experience of Jesus, but it is the experience of almost all humanity. In one way or another people experience rejection in life. For some, it begins at birth. In some places of the world, sometimes in America, people want only boys or only girls. The school yard experience is a cruel place where rejection occurs on a regular basis. I have been friends with two female pastors who were rejected be-

cause of their gender. Both were fine preachers who experienced tremendous pain. Many of us have watched rejection grow with extremism in the media. God help you if you are too far right, or too far left. Someone will criticize you harshly and reject you.

Even the church plays at rejection. I went to a large church in California. The Pastors and worship leaders were all Caucasian. The singers on TV, the musicians in the spotlight and people who were the "stars" of the church were also all Caucasian. The congregation was largely Hispanic and African American. The gospel they learned was you are in need and we have the answers. If you could just be white like us...

This Christmas, there will be many in our communities who will be rejected in our celebrations. Luke tells stories about the "haves" and the "have-nots". Luke tells us there was no room in the inn. John tells us there was no room in the heart. Matthew gives a name for Jesus. That name is Emmanuel. It means "God with Us!" Is there room for Jesus Christ in our hearts and in our Christmas celebrations? The answer to that question will shape how we shop, how we eat, how we worship, how we give to those in need and how we receive those new folk in the pew at worship. This year, I do not want to get caught up in the traditions of the season. Rather, I want to get caught up in the Joy of Jesus finding room in my heart. If Jesus finds room there, so will everyone else.

-Love, Pastor Bruce

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*Happy Holidays from
our family to yours!*



Rev. Bruce Hitchcock

Greta Bigsby

Debbie Birkhimer

Angie Brown

Debra Bryan

Sandra Chandler

David Gault

Rev. Toni Hubbard

Sharon Kirtdoll

Kitty Lancaster

Jeffrey Loftus

Heather Macre

Jim Sloane

Linda Smith

Rosemary Thompson

Ralph Washington

Christmas AT URBAN MISSION

Christmas Kid's Program

I started out with 504 children ages 12 and under to be adopted for our "Christmas Kids" program. Not long after knowing the number of children I found out the local radio station who has helped us in the past would not be able to do so this year. This was due to programming changes and not that they didn't want to help. The airtime would be unavailable to present the names this year. My first thought was how was this ever going to be a successful program. Then I was reminded who was in control and not to fear. So I bravely turned it over to the "Man Upstairs".

On the Wednesday morning before Thanksgiving, all the children had been adopted except ten. I received a phone call from Pastor Dave Sperry requesting children to be adopted. I told him I had ten children left and asked him how many of them he wanted. "Why, I want all of them," he told me. Praise God! He answered my prayers!!

Can you still help???.... Of course! For those still calling to adopt, I share with them the news that all the children have been adopted. However, there are several families who missed the signup dates at our agency and the other area agencies. In an effort to make sure all children have something under the Christmas tree, we will hold Santa's Recycle Shop (see additional info at left). This will be a place for parents to "shop" for presents to be placed under their tree. And this shopping trip has no fees attached!

Please remember the "Recycle Shop". Last year we had 97 families shop for their Christmas presents so there is a definite need. Your help with this project will continue to make miracles happen for those less fortunate!

-Linda L. Smith, Program Director



Santa's Recycle Shop

December 20 & 21, 2005

9:00-12:00; 1:00-3:00

Urban Mission Warehouse

311 North 6th Street

Steubenville, Ohio 43952

There is still time donate items for Santa's Recycle Shop. If you have any used toys, games, books and etc., please consider donating them for this program. We ask that these items be in very good condition as they will be Christmas gifts for children. If you would like to donate, please deliver them to the Warehouse at 311 North 6th Street in Steubenville, OH by **Friday, December 9, 2005.**



Mitten Tree



Our mitten tree is filling up with socks, underwear, hats, scarves, gloves and mittens for children and adults. Can you help us provide these items? Donations of these items can be brought to the Mission by **December 9.**



Christmas Distributions



Distribution of the **Christmas Kid's Items, Teen Stocking and Mitten Tree Items** will be held on Thursday and Friday, **December 15 and 16, 2005** at the Main Office (301 North 5th St.) from **9:00-12:00 & 1:00-3:00.**



Teen Stockings!



We have **200 teens 13 to 18 years old** who will be receiving one of our stockings filled with goodies. We have a special need for **male stockings**. There will be **82 females** and **118 males** receiving stockings.

If you would like to be a part of this program please call Linda at 740-282-2911. She will be happy to provide you with more information. **Please have the stockings to the Mission by December 9, 2005.**



Candlelight Christmas Service

On **Saturday, December 17 at 6:00 p.m.**, our Mission Rejoice families will be treated to a special candlelight service. This will be a night full of worship, music, joy and fellowship as we celebrate the true meaning of Christmas – the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ.



Christmas at Hutton House

As Shelter Director, it is my job to get to know all of the families in our shelter. I notice many different things and the one thing that stands out to me each year is the added stress to the parents when the holiday season approaches. What is a fun and exciting time for some is often a stressful time for those living in Hutton House. What most take for granted, Christmas Shopping, our families can only dream of doing so. But, each year, God provides us with people who donate gifts, toys and other items to us to help those at our shelters have a Merry Christmas. We could not do it with out them.

Would you like to help Christmas happen at Hutton House? You could buy a gift for a child, teen or adult. Perhaps you would like to donate items to make our apartments a "home" (cleaning supplies, Pots and Pans, 2006 calendars, TV/VCR combo, etc.) If you would like to become involved, please call Debra at 740-282-8903 and help us bring Holiday cheer to the hearts of those in need.

-Debra Bryan, Shelter Director

Thanksgiving Goal Met!

Our Turkey Meter has reached the top! We have reached our goal to provide **1,200 families** with all the fixings for **Thanksgiving Dinner!** It would have been impossible to have done this without your help. Thank you to the individuals, groups, churches and schools who took part in raising funds to help meet the need.

We also thank those of you who took part in this year's Thanksgiving Challenge in collecting different food items during the past several months. Each item donated, both funds and food, helped us reach our goal. Thank you again and may God bless each of you abundantly!

HEALTHY BINGO



**Healthy Bingo
Unity Kitchen
Wednesday, December 7, 2005
12:30 p.m.**

Healthy Bingo is a game designed to teach cancer education in a non-traditional way. Members of the cancer coalition will give health information between the bingo games and participants will have opportunities to win health and beauty prizes. All are welcome.

Event Sponsored by Women in Action Against Cancer Coalition

Mission Rejoice: Calling All Churches!



As we prepare to enter a new year, we think back on all of the wonderful memories this year has given us during our Mission Rejoice Services. All throughout this year, we had many churches that came to be in ministry with us for our Mission Rejoice Services. These host churches either preached, prepared a meal or both.

Mission Rejoice is a community effort for all denominations to come and minister to the poor in our valley. We very much want all of the local churches involved. We are now scheduling for the 2006 Calendar year. Please consider taking part. Perhaps you would like to have your youth group or Sunday School class come to prepare and serve the meal. All are welcome. We have been very blessed by those who have come in the past and shared with us. If you would like to be a part of this awesome ministry, give me a call at 740-282-8010, Monday –Wednesday and sign up. Don't miss your chance to touch someone else's life with the love of Christ. *-Rev. Toni Hubbard, Mission Pastor*

PARISH NURSE NEWS: World Aids Day

Each year on December 1st, we celebrate World AIDS Day. This day is celebrated to remember all those who've died from this disease and also as a chance to educate people about this disease. This year let's look at the ways a person can be tested for HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus), the virus that causes AIDS.

For years the only way a person could be tested for HIV was to go to either a hospital or a health department. Testing was done anonymously (you received a number and had to return to get your results) or confidentially (your name was associated with the test results, but the results were only released to the doctor who ordered the test). The only test available for many years was a blood test. The first blood test done was an EIA (enzyme immunoassay) which detected antibodies to the virus in a person's blood. If that test was reactive, a second EIA was done. If the second EIA was also reactive, then a confirmatory test called the Western Blot was done. If the Western Blot was positive, then the person was considered HIV positive.

Today there are other tests that can be done for HIV. Tests can be done on oral fluids that are collected from the mouth using a special collection device. These oral fluids ARE NOT SALIVA. An EIA test is done on the oral fluids, and a confirmatory Western Blot can be done on the same oral fluids. An EIA test can also be done on a urine sample, although

the urine tests are not as specific as the blood or oral fluid tests. A confirmatory Western Blot can be done on the same urine sample if the EIA is reactive.

Rapid tests have been developed to allow for quick results. The results can be obtained in 20 to 60 minutes. As with all HIV screening tests, a confirmatory Western Blot must be done before the person is diagnosed as having HIV infection.

Home tests, which are actually consumer-controlled test kits, were first licensed in 1997. There is only one test currently licensed by the FDA, which is the "Home Access HIV-1 Test System". It can be purchased at a pharmacy. This is not actually a test kit, but a collection kit. The person pricks his finger with a special device, places drops of blood on a specially treated card, and then mails the card to a licensed laboratory for testing. Customers are given an ID number to use when phoning in for the results. All persons receiving a positive test result are provided referrals for a follow-up confirmatory test as well as information and resources for treatment and support services.

HIV/AIDS is at epidemic levels in many parts of the world. If you believe that you may have contracted HIV, get a test as soon as possible. Early testing and treatment can lead to a longer, healthier life.

-Michalene A. King, RN, MSED, MSN



This month is our continuation of "Holiday Miracles" the staff of Urban Mission has experienced over the years. This is our way of showing you how your donations have directly impacted those within the Upper Ohio Valley. We are very fortunate to be in an area where people care and show love to their neighbors in need. We thank each of you for being a part of making miracles happen at the Mission.

On behalf of the Urban Mission staff, volunteers and friends, we wish you a very Merry Christmas season and a Happy New Year.

"Hutton House, A Place of Miracles"

Throughout the years at the Hutton House Homeless shelter, we've been very blessed. Many, many people have donated items to furnish the shelter apartments, personal care items, appliances and cleaning supplies to help our families. I am truly blessed to be a first hand witness of the love and giving throughout the year and especially the holiday season.

Each year, a group of faithful people from Salem United Methodist Church have called to get our list of children for their angel tree. These wonderful folks then drive a few hours, no matter what the weather, to deliver the gifts right to our door. An anonymous donor gives each year to help us provide a wonderful holiday for our families. And once, a family even called us on December 23rd asking if we had a family in need and then went out and bought

gifts and needed items for them.

At the shelter, we've learned not to take anything for granted. Donations of furniture items for the apartments are needed and as valuable as the cleaning supplies and personal care items that many folks donate.



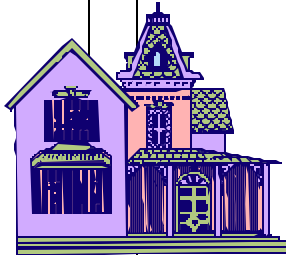
We are truly grateful for every donation that comes through our doors. I am truly blessed to be a first hand witness of the love and giving during the Holiday's and all year through. We are grateful for all of the friends of the Mission and to you for reaching out with your gifts and showing your love for someone in their time of need. May you and yours have a happy Holiday Season.

-Debra Bryan, Hutton House Shelter Director

"A Speechless Moment"

"Merry Christmas!" is a phrase you will be hearing from now until Christmas Day. Christmas is an exciting time. Here at Urban Mission, it is amazing to see God's plan in action. His plan for us is to show love and care for one another. We see love in action as the sanctuary fills with gifts and groups bring in gift bags and stockings for teenagers.

My favorite holiday story or moment is from the woman who never said, "Thank You". A mother came to pick up toys for her little girl. We handed her the large Barbie Dream Dollhouse and other toys. Her mouth fell open, her lips grinned and tears came to



her eyes. She stood there just looking at us. We saw the thanks in her face but she was unable to verbalize it. So I said, "You're welcome. We're glad we could help!" Words do not always express the real meaning of Christmas, because the joy we feel is deeper than words. "Merry Christmas" is not just an expression, it becomes a movement. It creates a sense of joy, peace and love that we all can be a part of.

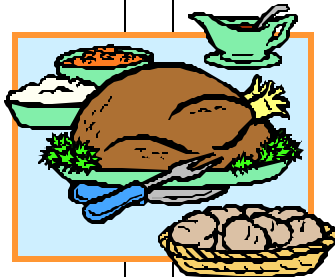
As you experience this Christmas season, I wish you and yours a "Merry Christmas", one filled with love!

-Sharon Kirtdoll, Community Developer

“A Thanksgiving Miracle”

It was my first Thanksgiving as the secretary at the Urban Mission. It was Wednesday, the day before Thanksgiving and all the staff had gone home except for Joyce, the Emergency Aid Worker and myself. We both had a few things to finish up so that we would have clear desks for the long holiday weekend. We were just about to leave when a young man came through our front door. We both knew him as he came to the mission and not only received help but volunteered when he could. He said that he knew we had given all the Thanksgiving baskets away but he really needed some help.

He had convinced his wife that they did not need to sign up for help this year, as he was doing some part time work for a man who promised to pay him. Well, Wednesday afternoon came and the man did not get paid. He said he just could not go home empty handed. He would be grateful for whatever we could help him with. Joyce told him that we did not have any turkeys or the usual Thanksgiving fixings, but she would see what she could find. Joyce went downstairs and started to put together a large grocery bag. I stayed with him and we chatted. As we talked the doorbell rang on the back door of the Mission. I ex-



cused myself and answered the door. There was a woman at the door who said that she got a surprise from her daughter. Her daughter had worked it out that they could leave town that afternoon and go to the woman's son for Thanksgiving. The woman was very excited about this visit, however, she had a problem. She had a thawed turkey and all the "fixings". Did we know anyone that she could give them to? DID WE KNOW ANYONE?! I helped her unload her car and I told her to follow me. I introduced her to the young man who shared his story with her. She handed him a complete turkey dinner, gave him a hug and thanked him for helping her not to waste the food.

Needless to say there was not a dry eye in the office. Does God work miracles? He does everyday at the Urban Mission!

This article was contributed by our guest columnists, Mrs. Gay Warren. Gay served faithfully as the Executive Secretary of Urban Mission from 1993-2002 before taking a job as the Administrative Assistant of the Steubenville District of the United Methodist Church (which is now the Ohio Valley District).

“Small School-BIG Faith!”



A few days before Thanksgiving, we got a call from Ms. Sue Neely from **All Saints Catholic School** in Steubenville. Ms. Neely expressed to me that she had a group of children she wanted to bring over to the Mission to present monies that the students collected. The students worked hard and conducted a drive to raise monies for the Thanksgiving Baskets. Each day, officers of the student council would count the monies from each grade and the grade with the highest total would then get to proudly display the “Turkey Flag”. The second grade class was the winner of the flag the most times during the drive. Members of the council that faithfully counted the monies were Dylan Kiedrowski, Garrett Kiedrowski, Simone Lewis and Peter Schreck.

Later that day, Ms. Neely came to the Mission with three members of the council so that they could get a first hand look at where their giving was going. Ms. Neely and the **students presented over \$420 dollars for Thanksgiving Baskets!** We were overwhelmed at such a large amount from a “seemingly” small school. The school consists of grades K-8 with a total school population of just 158 and yet they managed to contribute enough for at least 12 baskets!

This wonderful donation should serve as a reminder to all of us that it doesn't matter what the obstacle, if you have faith and put your mind to it, we can achieve anything with the help of the Lord.

-Angie Brown, Executive Secretary

DECEMBER 2005
Urban Mission Ministries, Inc.
301 North Fifth Street
Steubenville, OH 43952

Phone: 740-282-8010
Fax: 740-282-8514
E-mail: mail@urbanmission.org
www.urbanmission.org

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Upcoming Events in December 2005

3	Mission Rejoice	6:00 PM
5	Parish Nurse	11:00 AM
6	Hunger Committee	10:00 AM
7	Health Bingo (See inside article) Program/Evaluation Committee NCDC Meeting	12:30 PM 1:00 PM 4:30 PM
10	Mission Rejoice	6:00 PM
12	Parish Nurse	11:00 AM
13	Packing for Food Distribution	9:00 AM
14	CSFP Senior Food Distribution	1:00 PM
15	Food Distribution (Warehouse) Christmas Distributions (Christmas Kids and Teen Stockings)	9-12; 1-3 9-12; 1-3
16	Christmas Distributions (Christmas Kids and Teen Stockings)	9-12; 1-3
17	Candlelight Mission Rejoice Service (See inside article)	6:00 PM
19	Parish Nurse	11:00 AM
20 & 21	Santa's Recycle Shop (Warehouse)	9-12; 1-3
23 - 30	Mission Offices Closed	Closed
31	No Mission Rejoice Service	Closed
<i>Have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!</i>		



Holiday Schedule

Urban Mission will be closed **December 23, 2005 - December 30, 2005** to allow our employees to spend time with their families.

The Mission will reopen on **Monday, January 2, 2006** for regular business hours. There will be **no Mission Rejoice on December 24 or 31.**

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!