

TOPEKA RESCUE MISSION MONTHLY REPORT JULY 2020

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LANTERN OF HOPE CAROLYN'S STORY

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Over the past several months the world around us has been defined by loss. Lost loved ones, lost friends and neighbors, lost jobs, lost security, lost moments. The great majority of us in this nation have experienced or witnessed more loss than we have ever known in our lifetimes.

At TRM we have repeatedly asked the same question many others are asking right now. Amidst the chaos and confusion that has defined our lives this year, and the uncertainty that defines our coming months, where is hope?

Our headlines have been defined by loss and tragedy. We cannot turn on the news without feeling new devastation, anxiety and fear. We have no idea what tomorrow will bring, or this winter, or next year. And yet all around us are quiet acts of bravery, courage and kindness, flickering like lanterns of hope in the darkness.

In this newsletter we feature one of the “hope lights” shining at TRM during this pandemic.

Carolyn's Story:

Growing up in Kansas, Carolyn worked hard and supported herself most of her life. But after leaving a bad marriage and the resulting financial difficulties, she found herself with no where else to turn but the Topeka Rescue Mission.

Now in her 60's, finding a job and housing proved difficult - as did receiving help from government assistance. In her

words, “I wasn't old enough, I wasn't young enough, I wasn't sane enough, I wasn't sane enough.” She had fallen through the cracks of the system. A year after coming to TRM she was finally on the cusp of receiving social security and housing - and then the pandemic hit, stalling resources and stranding her again with a broken down car and health issues that put her at high risk for having complications from the virus.

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With no where else to go, she didn't leave TRM for several months and spent most of her time self-isolating outside in her car. Unable to see her son or friends due to the virus and unable to do anything to better her situation due to the



shutdown, she began going down to the river and gathering wood. With no idea why she was doing it, she filled her car with wood and other natural and discarded materials - all found within a mile of TRM.

Eventually the seats and the floor of her car were covered in wood and she had no idea why. She only knew that while she was stranded, while she was waiting with the rest of the world to know what was coming next, she was supposed to DO something.

Sitting alone in her car, she started carving the wood into crosses. It just felt right. It was frustrating at first, discovering what she was supposed to do but not knowing why or even how. She had never worked with wood before. The knife slipped and cut into her hands multiple times. Her fingers became full of splinters. Her clothes and the interior of her car were constantly covered in

sawdust and wood shavings. She talks about accidentally breaking the first cross she made, throwing it down and saying, "Good, I don't have to do this anymore." But she couldn't stop carving. She sat in her car and carved every day, simple designs growing more elaborate as time went on. Eventually she had so many crosses they filled the floor of her car. And then she started giving them away. She gave them to other TRM guests, volunteers and staff she encountered on her way in and out of the mission, at meal times, while smoking

outside, while stretching her legs - wherever she encountered people she would give away her crosses as little gifts to brighten someone's day during a pandemic.

She began venturing out of her car and carving outside, sitting at the bus stop across from the mission or on a lawn chair on mission property, and people started sitting with her, socially distancing alongside her, watching her carve. They asked questions. They asked why she was carving. Why she was giving away everything she made. And then they just started talking. Talking about their fears, their hopes, and how it feels to live or serve at a homeless shelter during a pandemic. Over the months her "carving times" became group therapy sessions, attracting more and more people to spend time together talking, creating and

connecting.

She describes not knowing what to say or do when people receive her crosses. When they start crying, or when they get very excited, her natural inclination is to run away. Yet she continues to hand out her crosses despite her desire to remain unseen. Carolyn said, "I should tell you that God did not speak to me. No burning bush or voices. But I know he is telling me something, and it's up to me to figure it out."

Over the past several months we have all experienced loss, grief, and fear. We have all experienced the uncertainty of huge unknowns. But we've also seen innovation and hope. People looking for ways to bless others, connecting as never before using whatever means are available to them. In Proverbs 13:12 we read, "Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life." May God grant you and your loved ones renewed hope and purpose in these uncertain times. May He plant a tree of life in your garden as you, like Carolyn purposed to hear what God was saying to her and find a way to bless those around you. †



What will bring us together?

A Note from Barry Feaker

As we continue to navigate the uncertainties of a global pandemic, along with the crushing realities of a potential economic disaster, we have once again become more acutely aware of our deep differences as a nation. The question before us is, will our nation survive all of this? Generational suffering, broken promises and unresolved anger will surely break these United States apart unless we humble ourselves before God and each other. Regardless of the color of our skin, the neighborhood we were raised in, or the race that defines our ancestry, God loves each of us with an unfailing love. In Gods eyes we are one race, the human race. While the solutions to the complexities of our centuries-long differences are overwhelming, let us remember for lasting change to occur we must have a solid foundation on which to build. It is time to recognize that we have failed to believe and recognize that indeed, “all men are

created equal“. Let us admit we have failed to fully embrace the greatest commandment, to love God and love our neighbor as ourselves. No laws, policies or proclamations will change the human heart. Only a genuine humble repentance before God and our neighbors will enable us to truly love each other and fulfill the destiny by which we were chosen to become, “one nation under God, indivisible with liberty and justice for all.” Could it be that God would use a global pandemic combined with a pending economic disaster along with a revelation of our national injustices to bring us to our knees in repentance? Would God possibly grant us a reprieve from consequences of our failures if we decided to fulfill the words found in Micah 6:8? “He has shown you, O mankind, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you but to act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?” May God grant us the wisdom and strength to do so!

CURRENT NEEDS LIST

FOOD ITEMS:

Sack Meal Items Needed: Slice or Bulk Lunch Meat/Sliced Cheese/Ziploc

Sandwich Bags

Food Bag Items: Meat (Frozen, Refrigerated, or Canned) / Ravioli / Spaghetti / Spaghetti Sauce

Mac & Cheese

Kitchen Items: Gallon Cans of Vegetables & Fruits

STREET REACH ITEMS:

Tarps/Sleeping Bags

SUPPLY ITEMS:

Fans / Clorox Wipes / Alcohol Prep Pads / Isopropyl Alcohol/ Bath Towels / Paper Towels

Toilet Paper / Kleenex (Large Boxes) / Dish soap / Twin Size Bedding / Powder Laundry Detergent

HYGIENE/HEALTH ITEMS:

Hand Sanitizer / Men's and Women's Deodorant (No Aerosol) / Foot Powder / Shampoo & Conditioner

Shower Gel / Razors (Men's and Women's) / Cough Drops / Hair Brushes / Liquid Hand Soap / Tylenol

Ibuprofen / Cold and Flu Medicine / Tampons/Women's Underwear (5,6,7) / Men's Underwear (30-38)/

Baby Wipes

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