

The Charlotte District E-Pistle

November 16, 2005

Subject: The Charlotte Rescue Mission Opportunity for Partnership and Mission

Substance abuse is a perennial issue in our culture. Individuals and families that suffer from the results of addiction to alcohol and other drugs desperately need the wise counsel and strong compassion of the church. But we who are clergy can be most helpful by doing effective referrals and avoiding the temptation of becoming part of the problem through non-professional responses.

One of the most effective treatment programs in our community is the Charlotte Rescue Mission. CRM was founded in 1938 to serve the needs of the homeless. Since that time, this program has developed a comprehensive Christian residential drug and alcohol recovery program for men and women. Using the model of Alcoholics Anonymous, counselors in this rehabilitation program identify the higher power as Jesus Christ and communicate the gospel message without coercion or guilt manipulation.

I have visited CRM, met with their staff, and am acquainted with its director, Rev. Tony Marciano. He especially wants to be of service to the Charlotte District of the United Methodist Church. He and the CRM staff are eager to be a reliable resource to each of our pastors in the area so that we can call on CRM professionals when we need advice to deal with someone in our congregation who has a substance abuse problem, or is the non-addicted family member / friend of the addict. This agency also offers workshops on Healthy Family systems and provides help to the non-addicted partner. The program utilizes many of the theological emphases of Wesley, especially through references to justification as the beginning of the life-long process of sanctification.

CRM also wants to provide opportunities for mission for the members of our congregations. This ministry is located near Bank of America (Panther) Stadium. Teams from our churches can contact the CRM office and schedule mission experiences in order to touch the lives of care receivers. Opportunities for service include the following:

- a. **Mealtime at the Mission** – We have an opportunity to prepare and serve a meal and be introduced to the Mission.
- b. **Tutoring** – We can work one-on-one with clients to assist them in improving their skills in reading and writing. Many of our clients have a second grade reading level.
- c. **Participation in projects** – We may identify a project at the Mission and work through a small group of the church to bring together the materials and people to complete the project successfully.
- d. **Provide essential personal items** – Clients need toiletries, underwear, coats, hats, gloves, etc.

The life-transforming programs of the Rescue Mission include these services:

Rebound Men's Program and Halfway House – Serving 132 men each day, 474 annually, in 90+ day substance abuse recovery programs. Rebound provides a full array of services from food, clothing, education, a Christian-based 12-Step program, substance abuse counseling, vocational rehabilitation and more. The current priorities include expanding services for the HIV/Hep C clients and the inclusion of an After-Care Counselor for CRM graduates. The agency's goal is for clients to live a life of sobriety and become productive citizens. One indication of this is the completion rate of CRM's recovery programs: twice the national average for comparable populations! I find this impressive. Due to the generous donations of many churches and individuals, this effective ministry is provided at no cost to the clients.

Dove's Nest Women's Program – This ministry is currently serving 12 women in a residential recovery program (50 annually). Dove's Nest is a program that specifically addresses the issues and needs of women. Current priorities include the extension of the program's services to 120 days, improving the physical health of each client, and expanding facilities/programming to accommodate additional women with a continuum of care.

Community Hunger Program – CRM serves as the managing agency for Charlotte's Emergency Winter Shelter and provides the evening meal for all its clients. CRM also opens its doors for community holiday meals three times a year. Last year CRM served 200,000 meals!

You can see why I strongly endorse this ministry and encourage our United Methodist churches to partner with CRM by doing referrals and touching lives with the compassion and grace of Christ. Contact our office if you would like to view and share a brief DVD that provides a visual testimony to this vital ministry. To learn more you may want to get acquainted with Rev. Tony Marciano (at 704 334 4635 ext. 202), e-mail address >tonym@charlotterescuemission.org

Thanks for all you are doing to make this a creative and productive Charge Conference season. I hope that many of you will truly be able to say, "I actually **enjoyed** being at Charge Conference." Of course, I concur with all of you that the best part comes when the last official report has been signed, sealed and delivered. Then we can look forward to the Charlotte District Clergy Christmas Banquet, December 6th at Myers Park.

Have a most fulfilling week, a meaningful Christ the King Sunday, and a restful Thanksgiving Day. You are touching the lives of many with a faith that makes sense in a chaotic world, a hope that is rooted in resurrection joy, and a love that makes life a fascinating pilgrimage.

Grace and peace,

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