



You shall give to him freely, and your heart shall not be grudging when you give to him, because for this the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in all that you undertake. For there will never cease to be poor in the land. Therefore I command you, 'You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in your land.'

Deuteronomy 15:10-11

Welcome to the 2012 Hope in the Streets annual newsletter. God continues to bless our efforts and we are so grateful for the awesome support from our volunteers as well as those who have donated to our organization. Without the time and energy from our volunteers and the cash, food, water, and other supplies donated throughout the year, we would not be able to reach out and “open wide our hands” to our homeless brothers and sisters.

So far in 2012, we delivered 5,575 meals to our friends on the streets and have another 1,000+ to go before the end of the year. While out on the Vittle Van route each Thursday and Sunday we are also looking for opportunities to provide other essential supplies to the homeless, including so far this year 300+ pairs of socks, 150+ hygiene kits, 130+ blankets, plus several hats, gloves, shoes, and so on. We are so grateful for everybody who plays a part in this vital service each week.

In 2011, we introduced the Lazarus program and in last year’s newsletter we reported on our first two candidates that went through the program. As you may recall, one of the candidates didn’t stay with us for very long before she found support through another channel. The other candidate, however, did manage to stay with us through a successful transition to full self-sufficiency. He made good on his outstanding tax bills, took over all his regular bills (housing, phone, etc), held down regular and consistent employment, and generally stepped out on his own earlier this year. We would ask that you join us in praying for him that he can maintain his self-sufficiency and build up his resources in the coming years.

We haven’t seen snow or super cold nights yet this fall, but winter isn’t far away now. This will be the 9th year in a row that we prepare and distribute our Winter Warmth Kits. We handed out a few already to some newly homeless individuals who hit the streets with nothing but the shirts on their backs in the last few weeks, but the bulk of the kits will be handed out over the coming months as winter finally arrives. These kits are a real blessing to those who receive them, and for many, they truly make a life or death difference.

Looking forward, I couldn’t be more excited to announce the prospect of a new Hope in the Streets program. I think we may call it “Worship Where You Are.” We have learned a lot over the last 9 years on the streets of Kansas City, and through Hope in the Streets we have been building one-on-one individual relationships with Kansas City’s homeless, providing food and essential living supplies, and generally providing love and support to this community. We have been doing this based on God’s call to serve the poor and homeless. He reminds us that the poor ‘will never cease to be with you.’

With the foundation of serving the physical needs of our homeless brothers and sisters firmly established, I have recently felt a conviction to try to address a higher level need ... to attend to the spiritual needs of those we serve. A common approach some faith groups have taken is to *serve the gospel first*, typically as a condition to receiving a promised meal or other resources later. We have come at this from a completely different angle ... to serve the physical needs first, build the relationships of genuine trust, and THEN invite those we serve to learn more about God and His gospel message.

We have also learned that the poor and homeless that we serve are not likely to change who they are or how they look or act. I don’t think God expects them to change either, so here in lies the challenge. Most church communities are founded around a building or physical structure. Weekly church services involve *going to that structure* and worshipping God *in that structure*. And the structure itself implies a level of decorum. Dress nice, take a shower, and show up on your best behavior. Sit in a chair or pew, listen to the pastor’s message, and be polite while you talk with the other members of the church before and after service. As you can imagine, this isn’t exactly the kind of environment most homeless individuals are going to gravitate towards.

The idea behind “Worship Where You Are” is to take away the requirement for a physical structure completely. In Ephesians 2:19-22, we see an example of how God directed that his people, with Jesus as the cornerstone, would become the basis of a virtual, or member based, church, without regard or need for a physical structure:

“So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, *in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord*. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.”

We want to bring a regular opportunity to praise and worship God to the street, to the places where our homeless community considers *home*, under the bridges and in the parks. We want to inspire an environment where somebody living on the street will feel comfortable, at ease, without self-conscience anxiety, but instead participates with dignity. We want to provide an opportunity for the gospel message to have an impact on a community that rarely has a chance to hear that message freely and comfortably ... and most importantly on a consistent basis. We don't want to do the easy “hit and run”, where you deliver the message, take names, and move on to the next missionary field. We want to develop a church body that stays together and prays together every week.

We are in the early stages of researching this concept and are considering hiring a part-time pastor. We have found similar examples of *building-less* churches in other cities, and in fact we are planning a trip to Waco, Texas where churchunderthebridge.org has had great success with a similar vision. We hope to speak directly with that organization and learn some lessons of what worked and what didn't work for them. If we decide to commit to our Worship Where You Are program, we will be taking a big step with Hope in the Streets by actually hiring our first staff member (in the form of a part-time pastor) to bring bible studies and church services into the streets of Kansas City. We would ask that you add Hope in the Streets to your prayers and ask God to guide us, and to bless our efforts to extend his Kingdom by spreading the gospel message to the homeless community of Kansas City.

This year is especially important for donations as we consider whether we can or should commit to the “Worship Where You Are” program. In our nine years of operation, none of our board members, founders, or volunteers has taken any form of compensation for what we do, and we don't plan to change that stance now or in the future. However, if we are serious about providing a regular and consistent opportunity for church services each week on the streets of Kansas City, we believe we need to recruit a pastor with a Masters Of Divinity degree (MDiv) or equivalent, an individual who has the background and commitment to serving God and discipling his flock, somebody with a passion for reaching out and administering especially to the poor.

We are proud to report again this year that there is no administrative overhead at Hope in the Streets ... every penny of every dollar we receive goes directly to providing much needed benefits to the poor and homeless in Kansas City. There are no office supplies being purchased, no marketing expenses, and no office space to lease. It's just us and our volunteers, and a desire to help those less fortunate.

If you would like to support our efforts, please visit our website at <http://www.HopeInTheStreets.org> and click on the “Donations” link on the left side of the page or you can send a check or money order to:

Hope in the Streets
PO Box 261
Stilwell, KS 66085

To those who have donated so generously to our foundation, we and the homeless we serve are grateful. If you like what we are doing and how we are doing it, please help spread the word. Feel free to forward this newsletter. Tell your friends, family, and co-workers about Hope in the Streets, and with God's grace we can continue to serve the poor and homeless here in Kansas City.

Sincerely,

Joe Ratterman
on behalf of the Hope in the Streets family