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HEARTSONG

Official newsletter of Inner City Women's Ministries International
20 Years of Serving The Living God

December 2024

“for I was hungry and you gave ME food, I was thirsty and you gave ME drink, I was a stranger and you took ME in, I was naked and you clothed ME, I was sick and you visited ME, I was in prison and you came to ME.”

Matthew 25:35-36 NKJV



Looking back on 20 years of founding, then serving the LORD through Inner City Women's Ministries International, I can say the Ministry did not start by delving into and acting upon the preceding verses. It happened as individual staff walked closer to their God.

"For I was hungry and you gave me food"

in me even as a believer. A couple of events occurred around this time.

First, a woman came knocking at the door of the inner city mission where I worked. The staff were afraid to help her. The woman was struggling with an addiction.

The second event involved a young girl and her parents. They were being exploited by a local land owner near where I lived just outside Winnipeg, Canada.

I remember saying to myself, (about the first event) "God, someone should do something about this!!" BUT before I could even get the sentence out of my head the answer came very gently but firmly, "YOU".

"I was a stranger and you took me in"

The name of the woman who knocked at the door of the mission was Irene. She, I and another believer Marilyn with whom I did prison ministry started a grassroots Christian addiction treatment program for women. This started with taking Irene home with me after a nudge from the Holy Spirit, to detox and grow spiritually.

Around this time more staff (all unpaid volunteers) joined us. ICWMI opened 2nd stage housing for women coming out of residential addiction treatment. We had two homes with up to 2-3 women in each home. The women were allowed to stay up to two years. This released the burden of trying to look for a job, a place to stay and helped secure a positive community after addiction treatment. At the same time we prayed for others to do what we were doing. This prayer has been answered.

The girl and her parents from the second event were never truly rescued in the physical sense. You ask how can this be in Canada? In this day and age? We must remember the words of Paul in Ephesians 6:12 "Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms." (NIV)

We had about 6 volunteer staff at this time. We may have been knocked down but certainly did not feel defeated. Our God was/still is with us. Marilyn, who lived and worked in the inner city became our first director. We are indebted to the church and para church leaders in Winnipeg and rural Manitoba and the many others who still encourage us.



"I was naked and you clothed me"

Again, feeling a nudge from the Holy Spirit we decided to have safehouses in Manitoba for police to bring rescued women from human trafficking. One police officer stated, "You know, we could use a house like this on every street corner in Winnipeg." Translated this means once the police are finished interviewing a survivor... sometimes they have no option but to bring the victim back to the location (sometimes their home) where the crime was committed. Hospitals, shelters and trauma counselors are over loaded.

Mentally stable family and friends are at times unavailable.

Many women are dropped off at our safe locations with just the clothes on their backs. We have clothes of all sizes on hand but really like to give them a gift card and let them choose the styles they like. Many women ask one question, "Why do you do this?". Some have never had ANYONE love on them like the police and our staff. This is when, "clothed in The Spirit" we verbally tell the women the Gospel, using Billy Graham's booklet tract, "Steps to Peace with God". Best tract out there.

HAVE TRACT ON HAND

And you know what? The women accept Christ on the spot. Many have gone back to their families and explained the Gospel. One has even started a rescue mission in her own province once she returned to her family.

Praise God for his mercy!!

"I was sick and you visited me"

impressed with the care at the St. Boniface Hospital we started and still do an annual St. Boniface Hospital Prayer. Every November 11th, we pray for all hospital staff, the patients, their families, front line workers in general and our ministry to women. We could not meet in the chapel (where we met for many years) during the pandemic but a few of our prayer warriors got together and prayed off hospital grounds. This year we prayed for the St. Boniface Hospital on zoom.



"I was in prison and you visited me"

In Manitoba, for years we held chapel services for women at the downtown Winnipeg Remand Centre and then became the first outside agency allowed to do services at the new women's prison in Headingly. We were also told that ICWMI was the first Christian agency to be allowed to do services in the history of one of the prisons in Jamaica.

In East Africa, Phanice has visited children at the Kisumu Children's Prison near Lake Victoria in Kenya. Now Phanice encourages and finds sponsors for a local Christian school which trains students to be evangelists.

Getting back to the Manitoba prison situation. Early on I met a young woman, CC. Despite CC's struggles CC had a strong heart to help others. She informed me that small safe shelters just for women were needed. Many did not feel safe at the present shelters. This led the way to respite locations both in and out of the city for women who "just needed a rest from street life." We named the first house CC's Place after

Some would cook, some would watch Christian movies, others just plain collapsed and fell asleep. The volunteers (always 2 or more) did the women's laundry at night. All participants were out the door at 7:30am. We drove them where they wished to start their day, usually at a mission downtown. Many shared positive memories of growing up on a farm or up North then hard times came, many times after a principle care taker passed away. In my time with the Ministry I have heard many participants ask myself or another volunteer if we could be their mom. My husband has been a "Dad" to many who have asked him. He has been known to tell them things they need to hear but maybe don't want to hear at the time.

Our international 'scene' referred to above, started naturally with first friends and then more who reached out to us. Phanice in Kenya, Joy working with widows in India, Kathy connecting us with the needy in the Middle East and our partners, SO MANY. We are indeed blessed at home and abroad in the area of partnerships.

Today, I think the largest unmet need in the Mission Field is letting those we minister to love and give back. Whether it be acting on their suggestions, letting them cook us a meal, passing out our tracts to their friends or letting them pray for us if they feel led. This brings forth humbleness in us and gives dignity to the ones we walk alongside. Both are God given characteristics.

We thank our God for allowing us to serve Him for 20 years.

We look forward to all He has in store for the next 20.

Shon McLaren, Founder and Director - Inner City Women's Ministries International



Save the Dates



Human Trafficking Awareness Days

February 22, 2025 (Canada)

March 13, 2025 (Manitoba)

Will you pray?

Praise and Prayer

allowed blank Christmas cards to be sent to 3 different prisons. This allows women to send cards to their loved ones on the outside especially their children.

Praise to our God for His continued faithfulness

Pray for ladies and others on the street during and especially after the holiday season

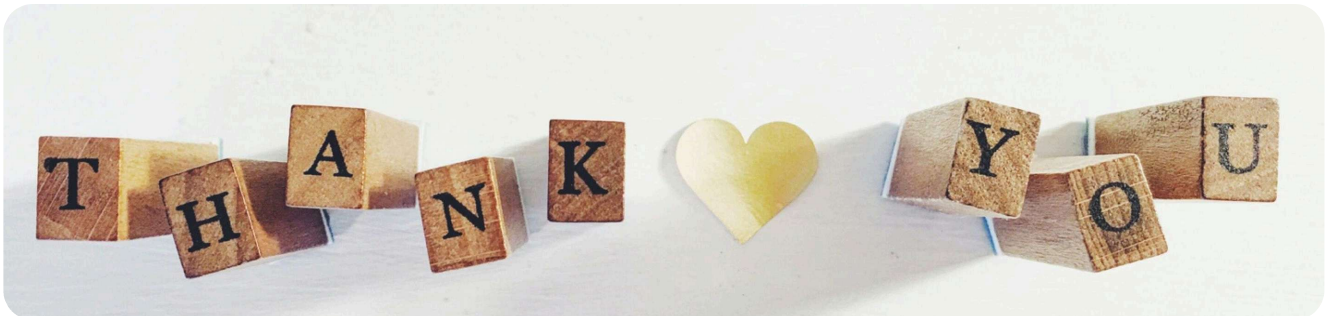
Pray for frontline workers, prison staff and our staff – wisdom, courage, and unity as we come across exploitative and rescue situations in the Province of Manitoba and beyond.



You're Invited!

The ministry's board of directors gathers in prayer on the 3rd Monday of each month at 7 PM via Zoom, united in faith and purpose. If you are interested in participating and would like to join us, please contact us for the Zoom link.

[Request for prayer link](#)



All glory to our God. ICWMI does not solicit for funds. Those who feel led to support may [contact us](#) or send a cheque.

All finances stay within the country in which they are donated.

