

Next Volunteer Training: January 23 & 24. See p.2 for details.

Starlight

Winter 2004

TAKING THE CHURCH TO THE STREETS

Starlight Ministries
of the Emmanuel Gospel Center
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by Starlight Director,
Paul Daigle

Over the past 13 years, Starlight has gone out to the Boston Common, Copley Square, Harvard Square, and other sites to serve people who are homeless on at least 1,300 different nights.

Starlight's volunteer teams offer food, clothing, blankets, friendship, and a worship service every Wednesday and Thursday night to people who are homeless. In addition to our outreach program, we offer case management, and a new Opportunity Resource Center, a comfortable room where we can welcome our homeless friends and offer them a shower, clothing, support groups, and more.

Starlight has a valuable contribution to make as we "stand in the gap" and work to meet the needs of many non-sheltered homeless men, women, and young people in Boston. Each week at our outreach nights, we have a time for relationship-building and just hanging out. While a few members of the team

are handing out clothes, food, and blankets from our van, the rest of the team mingles, visits with old friends, and makes new ones.

I remember one week when what I saw stopped me in my tracks. There sat one of my

team members on a park bench reading the Bible aloud.

What surprised me was the reaction of a homeless woman, "Janet," who was listening intently. I walked closer and heard Janet say, "read this now," or "ooh, ooh, read that again." My team member was reading from Janet's large-print Bible, a

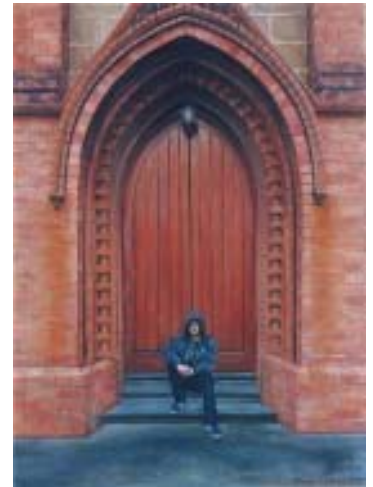
Bible she had bought for Janet the second week she volunteered with us. I was astonished then at the thoughtful, generous gift. I was even more amazed now at the scene of grace I was observing.

Standing in the gap can mean different things each week. One Thursday night had been relatively quiet when we started

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Starlight Stands in the Gap

10 Steps for Churches



Responding to the Issue of Homelessness

In round figures, there are over 6,100 people who are homeless in Boston, and about 500 Christian churches. If each church made a commitment to serve 12 people who are homeless, imagine the impact we would have on the issue of homelessness. Here are ten specific things church members can do to serve people who are homeless:

- 1 Pray.**
 - For individuals who are homeless
 - For policy changes; for poverty to be lessened
 - For direction on how you and your church can help
- 2 Find out** what your church is already doing to help those who are homeless, and then make a plan for what you want to do.
- 3 Learn** about key local resources.
Some great web resources include:
 - www.bostonresourcenet.org
 - www.masscares.org
 - www.helpline-online.org
- 4 Appoint** individuals to be points of contact for those in need.
- 5 Discern** real versus illegitimate needs when people ask for help.
- 6 Form** strategic partnerships with other churches and homeless service agencies.
- 7 Establish** an accepting/welcoming culture in your church.
- 8 Mobilize** your congregation for advocacy (policy change).
- 9 Support** the work of other organizations that are doing the work.
- 10 Integrate** service to meet both the spiritual and tangible needs.

If your church is interested in having consultation on reaching out effectively to people who are homeless in your community, please contact Paul Daigle at pdaigle@egc.org.



Outreach on the night before Thanksgiving, volunteers Vyvyan and Harold (center) flanked by two friends from the street

photo credit above: James Cochran, Youth at Church Door 1998, oil on canvas, 66 x 48 cm, <http://www.digitalscores.com/james/index.htm> used with permission

Volunteer Training Jan. 23 & 24, 2004 Call Today!

Fri., Jan. 23, 6:30 – 9 p.m.

✦ Training specifically for those interested in volunteering with homeless and street youth.

Sat., Jan. 24, 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.

✦ General information about Starlight, homelessness, mental health, and substance abuse for anyone interested in learning more about Starlight. **Required** for anyone interested in volunteering with Starlight's outreach ministries or our Opportunity Resource Center.

Contact Rachel Parker at the number to the right to sign up.

✦ **TO VOLUNTEER**, register for training, donate goods, or if you have questions about Starlight, CONTACT Rachel Parker, Operations Coordinator, at rparker@egc.org or 617.262.4567

A Call for Volunteers!

Opportunity Resource Center,
Mondays or Thursdays for 2 hours

✦ Starlight's Opportunity Resource Center, a daytime welcome center for people who are homeless, is now open on Mondays and Thursdays from 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. We are in need of volunteers during these hours to greet guests, make coffee, supervise clothing donations and shower times, and provide general assistance in creating a safe, healthy environment for our guests. Training is necessary. If you are available on Mondays or Thursdays for at least two hours at a time on a consistent basis, give us a call.

Clothing Sorters, Week of Feb. 16

✦ Starlight will be collecting clothing donations from people attending Vision New England's Congress in February, as we have done for the past several years. We often have several van-loads of donations to bring back to our office. If you are able to give an hour or two during the week of February 16 to help us sort clothes, please let us know.



Starlight hosted a Christmas banquet for our friends from the street on December 13. One of our guests came smartly dressed for the season.

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our worship service under the stars. We sang a couple songs, and then "Jack" appeared. I had known Jack for some time. We often used to have coffee together. He was a serene, older gentleman. This night, however, he was obviously intoxicated and announced as much as he burst into the worship circle. He walked straight to our worship leader and made verbal sexual advances toward her. Quickly I pulled Jack over beside me. With my arm around him, I asked him to act appropriately.

As the worship continued, Jack began telling me of his plans to take his life that night. Several times he attempted to leave, supposedly to accomplish this task. But each time I pulled him back and lovingly restrained him by hugging him *tightly*. At the end of our worship time, we prayed for Jack. As we were praying, I realized he would not be safe on the streets once we left, so I told one of the other leaders to call "911." Soon an ambulance arrived. Standing in the gap that night meant lovingly holding someone who was being rude, but who was also filled with pain and regret. Standing in the gap that night also meant dialing "911." The next morning I wondered, "What if we weren't there to make that call? Would Jack still be alive today?"

Standing in the gap means bringing the church to the unchurched, that is, bringing volunteers from local churches to share the love of Jesus Christ with those who would, in all likelihood, never enter the doors of our sanctuaries. It means being family and having an attentive ear to the hurting.

A few weeks ago, a newcomer to our worship circle asked, "Why do I feel so comfortable here? I never feel comfortable sharing at my AA meetings, but I feel safe here. You all really care!"

Standing in the gap is not always easy. I've been cursed at, had folks make sexual advances toward me, and even been threatened.

Taking the Church to the Streets means making a commitment. Relationships are not meant to be temporary, and discipleship is understood to be a long-term process. Because of addictions, mental illness, lack of stability in their lives, and even the migrant nature of the folks we serve, we cannot expect "nice new converts" overnight. Instead, our "success stories" are often about folks we've worked with for years. Standing in the gap means saying, "We will be here, right here, at the same place and at the same time each week." It means being faithful.

God used words about standing in the gap when he spoke to his people through the prophet Ezekiel, "The people of the land practice extortion and commit

robbery; they oppress the poor and needy and mistreat the alien, denying them justice. I looked for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land so I would not have to destroy it, but I found none. So I will pour out my wrath on them and consume them with my fiery anger, bringing down on their own heads

Standing in the gap means saying, "We will be here, right here, at the same place and at the same time each week." It means being faithful.

all they have done, declares the Sovereign LORD." —Ezekiel 22:29-31 NIV

Are you willing to stand in the gap, to defend the cause of the needy, and love the lost? It is God's desire that none perish, but that all should come to a knowledge of the truth. The promise is for everyone.

"'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.' How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?" —Rom. 10:13-14 NIV ✦

About Starlight

☆ **Starlight Ministries has a two-fold mission: to serve and disciple individuals who are homeless in Boston and Cambridge, and to build the capacity of churches and individuals to do the same.**

☆ A team of 100 volunteers from 30 churches "takes the church to the streets" to feed, clothe, and develop relationships with homeless adults and youth. Every year, Starlight gives away 8,000 articles of clothing, 5,000 meals, and 2,000 blankets.

☆ As relationships develop, Starlight provides case management to help people who are homeless and formerly homeless, networking them with agencies and services that can meet a variety of needs.

These key principles guide our ministry:

☆ **Power.** Our Christian faith is our foundation. Jesus Christ is at the core of all that we do.

☆ **Priority.** Our priority is building relationships, not just providing services. We try to live out the verse in Psalm 68:6 that says, "God sets the lonely in families."

☆ **Position.** Starlight stands in the gap between shelters and long-term homeless men and women who typically avoid services. We "take the church to the streets" rather than wait for those who are homeless to come to us.

☆ **Participants.** We work with people who are homeless *as they are*, not where we would like them to be. We are patient and understand that change may be a slow, long-term process. Discipleship and relationships are understood to be both long term and consistent.

☆ **Partners.** We help mobilize, train, and equip the individuals and churches in our community to help fulfill the mission, with the goal that churches will be challenged and trained to do more to reach out to people who are homeless.

Staff Happenings

✠ RYSE coordinator **Alice Rouse** presented at the U.S. Conference on AIDS in New Orleans in September on "The Forgotten Foundations of Youth HIV Prevention Programs."

✠ Over the last several months **Paul Daigle**, Starlight Director, has spoken at Lexington Christian Academy, Grace Chapel in Lexington, MA, Christ Chapel in Centerville, and to approximately 1,500 teenagers at a Supertones concert on Cape Cod. Paul also had the opportunity to meet with Lt. Governor Kerry Healey to discuss faith-based organizations' response to homelessness. And, with all that, he also found time to get married on Nov. 8, 2003, to former Emmanuel Gospel Center staff member and Starlight volunteer, Diana Hackman. *Congratulations to Paul and Diana!*



Volunteers Mark, Kate, Harold, and Vyvyan with Starlight Director, Paul Daigle, before outreach on Nov. 28, '03

Conference Helps Churches Understand Homelessness

✠ Starlight held a conference on September 23, 2002, entitled "At our Door, In our Pew: Helping Urban Churches Serve People who are Homeless." Congregación León de Judá in the South End hosted the conference, and approximately 55 local pastors, church leaders, service providers, and laypersons gathered to learn about the work that God is doing in the city through churches, and how to increase the effectiveness of that work. One person commented, "I am thrilled to see what God has been doing in the lives of people who are homeless." Many people also commented that they were encouraged about gaining increased awareness of the work that other Christians are doing in the city to serve people who are homeless. Resources given out at the conference will soon be on our webpage.

right: Clarence McGregor, Outreach Pastor, 2nd from left, talks with conference participants over lunch

Starlight's Wish List

- Thermal underwear
- New men's and women's underwear (including women's maternity underwear)
- T-shirts (white t-shirts for men or any kind of t-shirt)
- New or used men's shirts, pants, sweaters, and sweatshirts
- New men's socks (white tube socks, preferably)
- New blankets
- Toiletries, especially in travel sizes *Please no mouthwash!*
- Disposable razors
- Backpacks
- Jelly (to complement our surplus of peanut butter)
- Salt and pepper packets
- Sugar packets
- Craft supplies (glue, yarn, beads, etc.)
- Art materials (paint, brushes, canvases, etc.)

Currently we CANNOT use:

- Women's pants, shirts, skirts, dresses, sweaters
- Shoes
- Children's clothing, accessories
- Dress clothes (suits, ties, etc.)
- Bed sheets and pillows



“Brothers and Sisters,

I want to share with you, with some fear and also with sincerity—and to paraphrase the late Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.—

I, too, have a dream!

This article is an excerpt from the main session of our September 23, 2003, conference: “At Our Door, In Our Pew: Helping Urban Churches Serve the Homeless.” Several who heard this suggested we put it in our newsletter.



✦ That in spite of the difficulties and frustrations of the moment, I still have a dream.

✦ That despite living in an economic climate where individuals, the corporate sector, philanthropic foundations, and even churches have tightened their purse strings and are quick to say “no” to giving financially to worthy organizations serving the poor, I have a dream.

✦ That in spite of being in a political environment where it is acceptable to use public dollars to support golf courses, while the average age of individuals who are homeless is seven years old, I still have a dream.

✦ That despite tax cuts that seem more often to be geared towards the wealthy, seemingly without regard for the poor working class members of our society, I still have a dream.

I have a dream.

✦ I dream of a city where churches have not forgotten the poor.

✦ I dream of churches being moved with compassion as they see sheep without a shepherd.

✦ I dream of churches coming around homeless individuals, like Harold, and not only accepting him, but allowing him, encouraging him, to minister to them using the gifts God has given him.

✦ I have a dream of men and women with addictions getting clean and sober and returning to where they came from and becoming living testimonies to others, that they, too, can make it—like “Joe,” who was drunk and homeless in the Boston Common, and then came back years later as a father, husband, and architect to minister as a volunteer with our outreach team on the Boston Common.

✦ I have a dream of radically transformed lives — like one woman I know who was homeless and an alcoholic for over 20 years, and who now has a great job and commutes from her home in the suburbs.

I have a dream.

✦ I dream of a church serving those in need, those at their door and in their pew.

✦ I dream of a church that goes to the streets to model the transformation we seek in our city.

✦ I have a dream of a city that becomes a beacon—yes, a “city on a hill,” as our forefathers intended—to every other major urban area and to the nation, to give light on how homelessness, as we know it, can be abolished in our generation.

I have a dream.

✦ I have a dream, because nothing is impossible for my God.

✦ I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together. This is our hope. With this faith we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope.

I, too, have a dream.”

Paul Daigle
Paul Daigle, Director

This newsletter is available in color on our website: www.egc.org.

Thanks!

Starlight would like to say “Thank you!” to the following individuals and groups:

✦ The Boston Project Ministries—a faithful partner in ministry. Over the summer they provided us with countless volunteers and guidance as we relocated our clothing room and prepared the space for our Opportunity Resource Center. They also assisted us with our Christmas banquet, coordinating all of the food and decorations.

✦ The Packard Company, via Violette and Armen Aftandilian and their children Remi and Alene, which provided gifts to all the guests at our banquet, money for us to buy 150 new blankets, and helped serve and clean up.

✦ The Boston Temple Youth Choir, directed by Linda Merrill, which led carols at the banquet.

✦ Dorchester Temple Baptist Church provided food for the banquet and sent five women to help serve food and clean up.

✦ The following groups recently made in-kind donations: Trinitarian Congregational Church; Well Done Services, Inc.; Newton Junction Baptist Church; South Shore Baptist; Grace Chapel; Dover Baptist Church; Grace Chapel; and the Women’s Benevolent Society at Park Street Church.

✦ Rural Mail Carrier Kathy Roberts and the generous folks from Bolton, Mass., who drop off clothes for Starlight at their Post Office.