

# THE OLIVE BRANCH

## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT, STEVE RICKER: UNITY

**“Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of Peace.” Ephesians: 4:3**

**“Over all these virtues, put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.” Colossians: 3:14**



A few weekends back a Charis team member said to me, “The men on the weekend thought all of the team attended the same church.” I think his sharing this with me was a way of saying the team had succeeded in being united as one body in Jesus Christ. I thought to myself, it is so important for each team to be unified in bringing the love of Christ to the men coming to the weekends.

Charis calls us to unity and to set aside our differences and focus on our common beliefs. When I think about what we have in common, the list is long. Loving God, loving one another and love for the Charis ministry seems to summarize that list for me.

Achieving unity on teams presents a special challenge for Charis volunteers. All of us love the Lord, but come from many backgrounds, experiences and denominations. In other words, we may have been taught or have different understandings and interpretations as believers in Jesus Christ. In my experience with many teams there always seems to be some little concern or comment that has different meaning for different denominations. I believe most of the time these occur inadvertently as well as unintentionally. When this occurs we need to be careful to not let the evil one get us off course (take the focus off unity in Christ) by creating divisions and factions on the team. Those confronted with making a slip or comment should not be defensive, but rather listen and understand with an effort to achieve peace. Team members need to keep cool heads and exercise patience, respect, and forgiveness when these concerns crop up. (Sort of what would Jesus Do?) The best direction for me has been to pray about the resolution and advise the team leaders of the situation so they can handle them as the Spirit may lead them. God has placed them there for that purpose on the weekend.

I am familiar with two chaplains at the same institution that are an example for all volunteers to follow. They work as one in serving the Lord and in supporting Charis. You can tell they are both Christians by their love of the Lord and others, not by their denomination.

My challenge to all volunteers is to stay focused on common beliefs in Jesus Christ and bringing that love to our incarcerated brothers and sisters. Our effectiveness in bringing Christ’s love to others starts first with each of our hearts before the team can become one body in Christ.

May you all enjoy a blessed summer season.

## Charis Board Elections

The Charis of Minnesota board of directors is operating at nearly full capacity. At the June board meeting, five directors were re-elected to serve three-year terms, and James Wood was elected to serve his first three-year term. Janet Leck retired from the board after serving two three-year terms.

The following directors were re-elected: Jim Arend, Becky Yonts, Darlene Stensby, Bill Corrigan and Cliff Johnson.

Jim Wood has participated in Charis weekends at Sandstone, Rush City and Shakopee. He has also done jail ministry in Washington County for more than 10 years and been active in Via de Cristo, Stephen Ministry and Alpha.

“God has given me a heart for the imprisoned, for those going through life struggles, and for those who do not yet know him,” Jim said. “God has also tasked me with mentoring a number of younger men in one-on-one settings.”

Jim has served on boards for a number of non-profit organizations and has managed law offices for the U.S. Department of Agriculture for almost 30 years. He has five children and has been married for more than 40 years.

The Charis board still has one open director position, which was vacated by Gail Weems who died earlier this year. If you are interested in filling this position, contact Steve Ricker, board president, at [rekcir7@hotmail.com](mailto:rekcir7@hotmail.com).

## Charis Receives Grant for Bibles



Charis of Minnesota was selected by Shepherds in Christ International, a Minnesota-based international Christian ministry, to receive a grant of 500 Bibles. The Bibles were presented to Charis at a recent Shepherds worship service held at Wooddale Church in Eden Prairie. The Bibles will be distributed in Minnesota prisons during future Charis weekends.

Pictured at left are Richard Daniel, Director of Finance of Shepherds In Christ International and Cliff Johnson, Charis Board vice president.

## Remembering Charis '5th Dayers'

Charis of Minnesota has been blessed with an army of loving and giving volunteers who have served on and supported Charis teams in Minnesota prisons. We want to acknowledge the Charis volunteers named below whom God has called home to their 5th Day. We rejoice in their selfless service, pray for their families and friends who mourn their loss, and cherish our memories of time spent serving together.

If you are aware of a Charis volunteer who has died during the past year, please email name and prison served to: [info@charismn.com](mailto:info@charismn.com)

Charis volunteers who have entered the 5th Day:

Gail Weems (Charis board of directors, MCF-Rush City, FCI-Sandstone)

## Charis Music Manual Coming Soon

Board members Carol Anderson and Terry Christian have been diligently working on a music manual for use on the weekends. The goal of all their efforts is to provide guidelines for team musicians that will help make their task easier and more productive. The guidelines cover everything from building a worshipping community to organizing a song list that selects the appropriate music for the appropriate time on the weekend.



In addition the manual covers the requirements needed for CCLi licensing. With this license, team musicians have the ability to download overheads and music for over 3,000 songs. From old standards to new praise and worship music, the CCLi website allows musicians to offer a wide variety of music for a weekend. Every song downloaded and used on a weekend from CCLi must be reported back to the Charis board. Music sung from songbooks is exempt from this requirement.

## Charis#37 MCF Shakopee: Molly Slominski –Lay Director

What an awesome weekend our Charis #37 was! I now know why every lay leader says their weekend was the best ever... because this one was! Our inside team of 16 was filled with many veterans and also many fresh off their weekend last October. The weekenders were quiet and timid when we met them on Thursday evening, but by Sunday they were bursting at the seams, filled with the love and forgiveness of Jesus Christ! Their witnesses were both moving and funny and a few of the weekenders got up 2-3 times to share.

Our weekend verse was from Psalms 51:10, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me." God did, indeed, make all of our hearts new, both the weekenders AND the inside and outside teams!

Our table names were Bethany, Bethlehem, Cana, Emmaus, Jerusalem and Nazareth — cities in the Bible, just some of the many places where Jesus lived and carried out His Father's will, showing everyone he met his love and forgiveness. And so, too, Shakopee is just one of the places where our weekenders will live, and where they too can show the love and forgiveness that they were filled with to everyone in the institution. Our Redeemer is alive and well in Shakopee!!

**Return Address:**

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**CHARIS OF MINNESOTA INCORPORATED**



**Storage Facility**

The Board of Directors takes the role of managing the finances of Charis very seriously. One of the largest expenses of this ministry is the cost of the storage facility we rent to store all the Charis week-end supplies needed each year. At this time we are paying approximately \$200 per month for the use of a climate controlled facility.

We are searching for a more cost-effective means of storing our materials—one with easy access and preferably heated. The perfect scenario would be if someone could donate the use of a storage facility. If you can help in this area please contact Board president, Steve Ricker at [rekcir7@hotmail.com](mailto:rekcir7@hotmail.com).

**Can You Help?**



We all know how much music adds on a weekend to unite us in praise and worship and to draw our diverse group together. Charis would like to purchase 100 Psalm 33 songbooks to be used by the women at FCI Waseca. This facility currently does not have songbooks available for the women to use. You, our Charis community, have been generous in the past with special requests like this. We hope you will be once again. Needed is \$2,000.

Please send your donation to Charis of MN, PO Box 102, Hopkins, MN 55343.