

THE OLIVE BRANCH



LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT, CLIFF JOHNSON

I am honored and humbled to begin my term as Charis of Minnesota board president. I praise God for his goodness, and ask God to guide me so Charis remains a powerful force for transforming hearts of our incarcerated brothers and sisters.

We bid our outgoing directors a fond farewell at our June board meeting. Past president Steve Ricker provided inspired and selfless leadership during the past two years. Edy Barber and Becky Yonts contributed much as directors, and we will miss them.

At the same time, we welcome four new board members: Karen Troyer, Paul Tesarek, Don May and Dan Hartinger. All four bring years of Charis leadership experience and a great love for the Lord.

At the advice and guidance of one of our board members, we have begun to implement a “consent agenda” format for board meetings. A consent agenda is a proven tool for improving governance of organization boards. It involves distributing a meeting agenda and a packet of information to board members a week prior to the board meeting, and then voting at the meeting to accept the consent agenda with one vote, rather than wading through each item individually.

The consent-agenda approach requires that board members spend time ahead of the meeting, reading background materials and familiarizing themselves with the key issues for that month. The idea of a consent agenda is to turn the board meeting into a “meeting of the minds” around things that matter most.

We introduced the approach at our June board meeting and agreed that it works great and we should continue full-steam ahead with consent agendas in the months ahead.

I encourage you to visit the Charis website at www.charismn.com often for photos, updates on weekends and other good stuff. One more new thing: Charis is on Facebook! Thanks to board member Wyn Ray, you can now read Charis news and developments by visiting: www.facebook.com/CharisPrisonMinistry.

I’ve told our current board that, as president, I want to be totally approachable and willing to talk to anyone at any time about how Charis can continue delivering on our mission: to present God’s reconciling love in Jesus Christ to inmates in correctional institutions.

I’m looking forward to serving you in the year ahead. Please feel free to contact me at any time at 952-466-2288 or cliffjohnson1@mac.com.

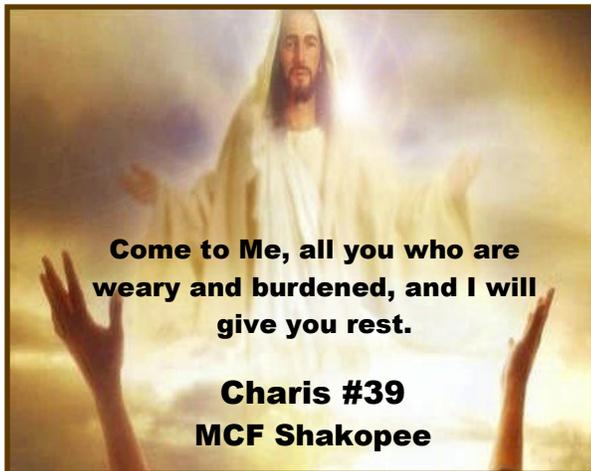


Outgoing board members receiving a parting gift. Left to right: Becky Yonts, Steve Ricker, Edy Barber

Shakopee Weekend: Brenda Duncan, Lay Director

I have had time to reflect on Charis #39 and it absolutely amazes me how God can work through any circumstances, no matter how hard they are, and make something GREAT out of the ordinary. Let me explain. I worked for a church for 14 years and we would always say that the seven deadly words that always complicate change are: "That's the way we always do it."

Shortly after I went through Day 0 Training, I was told that the institution at Shakopee had some changes that needed to be made such as: a cut back in training which meant no more new people, just retraining veterans; less availability of rooms for chapel visits; shorten the Sunday schedule by 2-1/2 hours; and other changes. Well, I truly needed to rely on God to take something that seemed very challenging and make



something great out of it, and He surely did! Being a very detailed, stay on schedule, type of person, I needed God to stretch me and show me that when HE is in control, He can make great results out of necessary changes.

First, many veterans came together to form an incredible team that was amenable to change. Then we decided to use Waseca's idea to have Talk #1 on Thursday night which worked perfectly to form the "table family" right from the start and also give the weekenders a short example of what the weekend was going to be like. Because of only four talks on Friday, we were able to add another chapel visit that day, allowing the table families to bond earlier and spend more time in close sharing. The lack of

rooms available for chapel visits was taken care of by having two families stay in the community room for their sharing on opposite sides of the room. With six tables it worked out to have two different tables each of the three days of the weekend stay in the community room chapel visits.

Shaving 2-1/2 hours off of Sunday's schedule was a little trickier, but again God gave us the perfect plan. Since we were ending at 6 PM rather than 8:30, the team just skipped eating dinner that night and was available to help get the supplies out of the institution during the late afternoon, rather than during the apostolic hour. During the 3 PM count on Sunday, we transformed the community room into a mini-chapel to have a shortened version of the apostolic hour just before dinner at 4:10. We gave out the Bibles, crosses, palanca envelopes and certificates during this time. We then saved the sharing time for the closing which was held in the gym from 4:30 to 6:00. The sharing time was enhanced by it being the first time they shared rather than a repeat sharing of what was said at the apostolic hour.

All in all, I believe the team was truly blessed by the changes because God was showing us that change can sometimes and actually quite often be for the good. As for the weekenders, they had no idea of how "we always used to do it" so they had no idea there were changes. God is good! And He received all the glory. I was truly blessed and honored to be a part of Charis #39!

Paul Tesarek:

Background: Grew up in Hopkins/Minnetonka area and still live in Minnetonka; graduate of St. Cloud State University. Have worked in the banking industry for 38 years - primarily as a lender. I've been with the same bank for the past 24 years. Married to Sue for 40 years, parents of two adult children. Lifelong member of Faith Presbyterian Church of Minnetonka. Served on six Charis teams, all at Rochester.

Gifts for board: In the local business community over the years I've served on a variety of Chamber of Commerce and Minnetonka School District committees, as well as volunteering on a variety of committees at church. I'm a listener first, then I speak up. In the banking business and as lenders we are taught not to judge without getting facts. I tend to not judge a situation immediately until I hear the facts, and I also feel that when there is not a clear cut right or wrong choice - that there is middle ground to be negotiated.

Dan Hartinger:

Background: Raised in Detroit, MI and graduated from Wayne State University with BS in Chemical Engineering. Worked 19 years for Ashland Inc in composites R&D (Columbus, OH) and six years for Valspar in polymer synthesis. Married 23 years to my wife Cyndy; no children. I enjoy spending time in God's word, swimming, hiking, gardening, woodworking and a little photography. Just starting to build a wood strip kayak with which to cruise the St. Croix River and other scenic spots.



New Board members, from left to right: Dan Hartinger, Karen Troyer, Don May, Paul Tesarek

Gifts for Board: My spiritual gifts are teaching and exhortation and I'm very analytical in nature. I served in Kairos for five years at Marion Correctional (OH) and five years in Charis at Faribault. I hope to bring a fresh set of eyes to the Charis Board and help map out best practices. I have a deep love for those who are incarcerated and I thank God for the opportunity to serve Him in this new capacity.

Don May:

Background: Live in Hastings. Married to Carole, three adult children, out of the home and six grandchildren, also out of the home. Members of Hastings UMC. BS from UW-RF with graduate work at Mankato SU. Served on 10 teams at Rochester FMC and Waseca FCI #1. Retired mental health program director, professional counselor. Licensed spiritual director. Served on Unidos en Cristo Council for five years. Served on many, many secular boards of directors.

Gifts for Board: I believe the many years of board leadership experience and several decades of professional counseling experience were God's plan to prepare me for ministry, especially prison ministry.

Karen Troyer:

Background: Born and raised in Minneapolis. Educated and worked until 1988 when I married John Troyer and went to work for Make Old Things New, a small nonprofit agency that houses and works with persons in recovery. Our children David (17) and Miranda (32) and our two grandchildren live with us in St. Paul. My mom lives with us half-time.

Gifts for the Board: I served on the Kairos/Charis Board of Directors for two terms beginning in 1988. I have served at Sandstone, Shakopee, Rush City, Faribault Waseca and Yankton SD on dozens of teams. I was lay director at Shakopee Charis #12 in 1994. I bring a heart for prisoners and their families, along with 25 years experience in daily contact with ex-offenders. I also bring a strong business administrative background to the board. The greatest gifts in my life came from inside a prison. I am blessed to serve my Lord in the place that has brought me new life.

Return Address:

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CHARIS OF MINNESOTA INCORPORATED

Meet the 2012 Charis Board of Directors:

Elections for the Charis Board of Directors and officers were conducted at the June meeting. Charis Board members serve for a term of three years, and if re-elected may serve two consecutive terms.

New Members:

Dan Hartinger
Don May
Paul Tesarek
Karen Troyer

Continuing Board members:

Carol Anderson
Jim Arend
Barb Dickie
Terry Christian
Wyn Ray
Rev. Darlene Stensby
Maria Thaelke

Elected as officers:

Cliff Johnson, President
Maret Ryan, Vice President
Shirley Boeser, Secretary
Jim Wood, Treasurer

***Thank you for
serving!***