



CHARIS OF MINNESOTA INCORPORATED

# The Olive Branch

Charis President:



**Cliff Johnson**

## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

I hope your spring schedule will permit you to attend our Charis “Grand Celebration” on Sunday afternoon, May 18 at Hosanna Church in Lakeville (see details inside).

We are planning this event because every time the statewide Charis community gets together, everybody says “We should do this more often!”

Grand Celebration chair Lori Kemper is putting together three hours of food, social time, speakers and.....celebration!

We want to celebrate because Charis (actually, the Holy Spirit) continues to transform hearts of men and women in Minnesota’s prisons.

We’re delighted that the warden and head chaplain of MCF-Faribault will be joining us and giving talks about their view of, and experience with, Charis. Chaplain Tony

Mustazza has been deeply involved in all 10 Charis weekends at Faribault, and Warden Bruce Reiser has spoken at the weekend closing service at the last two weekends.

If you can attend the Grand Celebration, I encourage you to think of a friend or acquaintance who might be interested, or gifted, in prison ministry. Invite him or her to join you and maybe the Holy Spirit will inspire your guest to sign up for a future team. And please bring your spouse, even if he or she isn’t active in Charis.

We’ve had several meetings recently with institutions interested in Charis. Three representatives from the board met with a staff person of the Minnesota Sex Offender Program of Moose Lake. We are considering whether the Charis model fits the needs of that institution. We are also discussing a Charis weekend with a

chemical-dependency rehab program in northern Minnesota.

Finally, we ask you to prayerfully consider a financial gift to Charis of Minnesota. Charis is not destitute, but the cost of staging weekends increases each year, and I assure you that your gift to Charis will be put to good use. In the meantime the Board is exploring ways to become more cost effective.

This is the last issue of Olive Branch in which I will address you as Charis president. My term ends in June and I will leave the board after eight years. It has been a privilege to serve as president. I know I will miss the Charis board because it (the 15 directors) is such a marvelous faith community. We are truly brothers and sisters in Christ, and there is no better place to be than among brothers and sisters in Christ.

**Charis Mission:**

**Presenting God’s reconciling love in Jesus Christ to inmates in correctional institutions in Minnesota**



**Join us for a  
Charis Prison Ministry  
Grand Celebration**

**Sunday, May 18, 2014  
2-5pm**

**Hosanna Church Door 1  
9600 163<sup>rd</sup> Street West  
Lakeville, MN  
(off 35W and Co. Rd. 46 exit)**

Don't miss this opportunity for our ministry of leaders for Christ to come together for meaningful fellowship, equipping and fun.

**All are  
welcome!**

**Old friends,  
new  
friends,  
Cursillistas,  
spouses too!**

**See you  
there!**

**Guest Speakers:  
Warden Bruce Reiser  
Faribault State Prison**

**Chaplain Tony Mustazza  
Faribault State Prison**

Bring a Dish Meal – bring a dish to share, with serving spoon. Charis will supply the paper products. Wear a nametag if you have one. If you play an instrument, bring that along too!

## Team Love ..... Karen Troyer

In December we were informed that the only options for a spring Charis weekend at MCF Shakopee were holiday weekends. Knowing that President's Day weekend would start on Valentine's Day there was no question IF we would bring God's love to Shakopee—rather we knew only that we had just the month of January to prepare.

Our weekend theme was decided early: GOD IS LOVE (1 John 4:16). Team LOVE was formed from a mix of veterans, two former offenders, and a few brand new volunteers

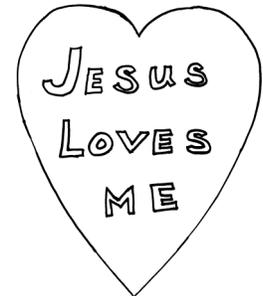
Although our team was plagued with sickness, injury and unrelenting cold and snowy weather, the Holy Spirit made provision and wove our team members

together in a spirit of love and humility. Chaplain Amy assisted the weekenders and leaders at every turn and smoothed the way for our abbreviated preparation and planning. This weekend, #42, was only her second Charis since coming to Shakopee, and she has really worked hard to understand and simplify the process we must go through to present our weekends. We are grateful for this.

The weekend was glorious. 36 women completed the weekend together. Our emphasis began and ended with GOD'S LOVE and our team was blessed to invite our new sisters to join us in the 4th Day, to hold tight to the unity we have in the family of God, to accept forgiveness and to let go of the things that hold us down and keep us from experiencing

GOD'S LOVE — way different from the 'love' that is promoted in our world.

Although initially we were concerned there wasn't enough time to develop community among our team members, our oldtimers focused on the newcomers and their needs and questions. Once we entered the prison on Valentine's Day, dressed in red and prepared to listen and love, our Valentine's greeting was filled with God's LOVE and the promise that His LOVE surrounds us every day! I praise God for loving us so well and so faithfully that we are filled to overflowing, that we want to share out of our abundance of His love with our sisters, His daughters, the mothers of His children.



## Neither rain nor snow ..... Maret Ryan



I'm sure you've all heard this famous creed of the US Postal Service. ... 'Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds.'

I think the same could be said of the intrepid Waseca #4 Charis team. Facing a ground blizzard in Waseca the team was told to delay coming into the prison for two hours on

the final day of the weekend because the parking lot had drifted over and there was no way that cars could enter. Slogging through snow piles up to their knees, these stalwart volunteers were eventually allowed to park in the staff lot, and then proceeded to make the most of this already short day.

Carole May, the Lay Director of the weekend, was also challenged to make the day work. Making up two hours is a big deal. As she said, "I am a person who likes things to flow as planned. I like things organized but I quickly learned to give all the control over to God to make the day work." And as everyone who

finishes a weekend knows—God always has the whole weekend planned from the start.

With a weekend that began on Valentine's Day, with pink and red the theme colors and hearts everywhere—there was no doubt in anyone's mind that little things like gale-force winds and three foot snowdrifts would not stop God's all-prevailing love from filling the weekend.

So for the winter that looked like it would never end, seeing God's people persist through all the challenges that came their way, we truly know we can count on God's 'son' shine to fill each and every weekend.

**As I think about our Charis community, many are old and dear friends and many are newer friends. Since we have to go separate ways to the various prisons for the monthly reunions, I feel the May 18 Charis Grand Celebration is a special time to come together in one place for fellowship and growth. I encourage everyone to please come. We also want the Warden and the Chaplain's messages to reach as many of our community as possible.**

**Lori Kemper,  
Event Chairperson**

Charis of Minnesota Incorporated  
PO Box 102  
Hopkins, MN 55343



**We hope to see you on May 18 at the Charis Grand Celebration  
at Hosanna Church in Lakeville.  
Put everything aside and bless us with your presence .... prepare to be blessed.**

## HELP WANTED

### Board of Directors Elections

Two positions are available for the Charis Board of Directors, effective July 1. An election for these two positions will take place in June.

- Members are elected to serve one three-year term.
- Board responsibilities include attending one meeting per month in Edina on the third Thursday, serving on a committees as needed and participating in Board retreats.
- An application and an interview with the Board are part of the process.

Deadline is April 15, with interviews before the Board scheduled for May.

If interested contact Maret Ryan at [maretryan@aol.com](mailto:maretryan@aol.com).

### Prayer Requests

Please pray for:

- A good and Godly person to replace the chaplain at FCI Waseca when he retires—someone who will just love the Charis ministry!
- Two weekends per year to be restored at FCI Rochester!
- The ideal candidates to respond to God's call to serve on the Charis Board of Directors!
- An overflowing of joy at the Charis Grand Celebration in May and an abundance of people to attend!
- More volunteers to step forward and serve on all the Charis weekends!
- Spiritual Directors (men and women) to step forward to work on the Charis weekends!
- God's anointing of all Lay Directors selected to lead in 2014!
- God's will and way with all the prisons—that His grace and glory would be magnified!
- The Charis Board of Directors, that they would continue to seek God's leading in all they do!

### Team Members Needed

**Charis at FCI Waseca needs you!**

We are now providing two weekends per year at FCI Waseca —one weekend in February and one weekend in October. And we could use more help. Reunions are on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month, with 15 volunteers going in each time.

Want to get back on a team? Or try a a different prison? How about serve with your spouse? (Both men and women can serve in the community room.) At FCI Waseca, you will find:

- Women who are isolated from family and so grateful that someone from the outside cares about them.
- A Christian community inside the prison that is growing and thirsting for God's word.
- Gratitude galore!

Please pray about this and if interested, contact Maret Ryan at [maretryan@aol.com](mailto:maretryan@aol.com).

We need you!