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PABC Newsletter #5 — February 2015

Helping the Homeless in the "Thumb" of Michigan

Bible Church Homeless Coalition Begins

You are invited to attend an informal meeting of the Bible Church Homeless Coalition, either **Wednesday, February 11 at 6:30 P.M. or Thursday, February 12 at 2:00 P.M.** Charlotte and Wendy, and several other long-time Huron County citizens are organizing the Bible Church Homeless Coalition in an effort to further involve Thumb-area Christians in caring for our population in need. The Coalition is intended to help local churches, individual Christians and the Port Austin Bible Campus homeless ministry work together in Christian service.

These first meetings will be held at the Port Austin Bible Campus dining hall to offer a tour of the facilities there and to discuss the history and present state of homeless people in Huron, Tuscola and Sanilac Counties. Two meetings will be held next week, in order to find the most convenient meeting time for all.

Port Austin Bible Campus is located at the old Air Force Station, 8180 Port Drive, Port Austin, Michigan 48467. During the winter, take M-53 South from Port Austin, pass Family Dollar and turn right onto South Channel Drive at the Windy Hill Campground Sign. Follow the turns in the road to the Port Austin Bible Campus sign, then proceed to the next single-story building on the left—the campus dining hall. Enter the door near the two picnic tables. Contact Charlotte Thuemmel (989-738-8772) or Norman Edwards (989-738-7700) for more information—even if you are not able to attend these meetings.

The Bible Church Homeless Coalition operates on a non-denominational, Bible-believing Christian basis. Its purpose is not to teach for or against any particular church's doctrine. Rather, its mission is to give an opportunity for Christians of any background to fulfill the Biblical teaching and our individual spiritual callings to help those in need, in the name of Jesus Christ.

The coalition will recruit and coordinate volunteers to organize and implement programs working with the homeless and/or the shelter. Almost any kind of Christian service is possible. These are some of the areas where appropriately equipped volunteers might be able to serve:

- Provide information about jobs, housing and other resources available locally, which homeless people might not be aware of.
- Provide transportation to jobs and critical appointments for those who need it.
- Help sell things that were given to help the homeless via garage sales, eBay, Craigslist or the faceBook Huron County Garage Sale.
- Help with cleaning, food preparation, repairs and construction at PABC.
- Lead work parties of PABC Guests in the above areas.
- Teach classes or give Bible studies for homeless people.
- Offer jobs to qualified homeless people.
- Mentor one or more homeless people. This would involve visiting them on a regular basis to determine their "next step" in life, and then encourage them to make progress as they are able.
- Serve as volunteer substitute staff at PABC for a few days when existing staff members need to leave for ministry, medical or family-related trips. The current four PABC staff members are all volunteers and either work or are on-call 24 hours a day, seven days a week. We need one or two people in this capacity in just a few weeks!
- Take one or more appropriate homeless people into your own home if you are able. This would be especially helpful for those who have jobs or school far away from Port Austin.

Everyone is welcome to come and bring their ideas, talents and constructive criticism.

Christian Mentoring Basics

Mentoring is an important Christian concept for all mature believers to understand. It is the process of one person helping another to become a better person. This article is written with future Port Austin Bible Campus mentors in mind, but is useful to anyone hoping to help the character and abilities of others: parents, teachers, bosses and anyone engaged in Christian ministry.

- Mentoring is **not** simply telling another what they are doing wrong—that is *condemning*.
- Mentoring is **not** doing things for somebody else—that is *enabling* their deficiencies.
- Mentoring is **not** creating circumstances that force people to “do the right thing”—that is *controlling*.
- **Mentoring is** showing another person the value of what is right, and helping them to want and achieve those right values and actions on their own.

Mentoring Summarized in Galatians 6:1

Eight fundamental principles of mentoring are summarized in one verse in the Bible:

Brothers and sisters, if a person is discovered in some sin, you who are spiritual restore such a person in a spirit of gentleness. Pay close attention to yourselves, so that you are not tempted too. (Galatians 6:1, NET).

1. **“brothers and sisters”** — This verse is to believers—spiritual brothers and sisters in Christ. A person should be a Christian before trying to mentor another.
2. **“person”** — Any person can be mentored. They do not necessarily need to be a Christian.
3. **“discovered”** — The mentor has to have discovered the difficulties of another person. One cannot mentor someone whom one does not know or help with an issue that either person refuses to admit exists.
4. **“some sin”** — The Bible shows us what is good and bad. The mentor has to know what sin is (James 4:17; 1 John 3:4). We can help people overcome sin (1 John 5:4-5; Revelation 2:7,11,17,26; 3:5,12,21). Trying to help a person continue in a sin will never result in success.
5. **“you who are spiritual”** — A mentor must be Christian who is full of the Holy Spirit. A new Christian is often better waiting before becoming a mentor.
6. **“restore such a person”** — We are to become like Christ The Greek word for "restore" here is the same one Jesus used when he said: “A student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is **fully**

trained will be like his teacher” (Luke 6:40).

7. **“spirit of gentleness”** — Mentors must be gentle when they help others—they should be known by their love for others.
8. **“pay close attention to yourselves so that you are not tempted, too”** A Christian mentor usually knows their student's difficulties—other's faults are usually easy to see. When mentors are close to people who are sinning, they can become involved in the same sins. It is easy to become depressed from their student's sufferings and inability to overcome. They can become angry at those who have victimized their students and be tempted to bypass the justice system and sin against them. **If a Christian finds themselves drawn into sin through mentorship**, they need to seek God for deliverance or stop their mentoring until it is resolved.

These eight principles explain the “Who?” and “How?” of mentoring. But **what** do mentors do.

The "Iron Rule"

Many years ago, my cousin, a man often involved in Christian service, asked me if I knew the "Iron Rule". I knew the "golden rule" was: “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Leviticus 19:18). But what has the iron rule?

Never do for others what they can do for themselves.

While this rule is not specifically in the Bible, the principle is repeated over and over. In the first three chapters of Genesis, we see that God made the first two people, and commissioned them to have children to create the rest of the human race. He planted a garden, and told them to take care of it. He made animals that would reproduce themselves, but had the people name them. He told people to gather food for themselves. When the people made clothes of fig leaves (could be itchy), God made clothes for them of animal skins—but let us do that ever since. With only a few exceptions, such as the miraculous conception of Jesus, some miraculous multiplying of food and clothes that lasted 40 years in the desert, God has left these basic tasks to mankind, ever since the original creation.

Even so, people occasionally find themselves unable to take care of our own needs—sometimes due to their own mistakes, sometimes due to the sins of others. It is godly to want to help with immediate needs when we can:

But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him,

how does the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth (1 John 1:17-18).

But if one finds out that a person is becoming needy due to difficulties they cause for themselves, then other scriptures teach us what to do:

For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat (2 Thessalonians 3:10).

A hot-tempered man must pay the penalty; if you rescue him, you will have to do it again (Proverbs 19:19).

Jesus miraculously fed 5000 people when they had spent so much time listening to Him that they had gotten very hungry (John 6:5-14). However, when the people wanted to immediately make Jesus a free-food-providing king, He refused (John 6:15-35). Jesus could have made unlimited food, but He would not do what the people could do for themselves. Neither should we. Just because a mentor has things that a student is asking for does not mean the mentor should always give them.

Know Those Whom You Serve

For a mentor to follow the Iron Rule, he or she must get to know the people whom they intend to serve. What are their strengths? What are their weaknesses? What are they able to do? What can they learn to do?

When getting to know a person, one cannot be judgmental. Even a diligent Christian of many years cannot regard themselves as better than those whom they mentor, “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). Remember, Jesus told a group of respected religious and government leaders that “corrupt tax collectors and prostitutes will get into the Kingdom of God before you do” (Matthew 21:23,31, NLT).

Simply because someone has struggled with sins that we have not, or because their sins are more obvious to others (1 Timothy 5:24) does not mean they are somehow worse than we are. Listen, learn, understand, empathize, but do not disdain another person for whom Christ died (1 Corinthians 8:11). Everyone has hopes and dreams for the future. Everyone wants to receive good things in life, even if they do not know how to achieve them. Here are some of the things you will want to know.

- What family do they have? For younger people, this will be about siblings, parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles. Older people will talk about spouses, boyfriends, girlfriends, exes, siblings, children and grandchildren. Good family relationships give

people motivation to do good things.

- Do they have any friends now? If so, where? How often do they communicate? People with no current friendships will present a special challenge. Their reasons for living are often very materialistic—which do not lead to happiness (Ecclesiastes 5:10; Matthew 6:19-20).
- What is their attitude toward truthfulness? It is difficult to find out by asking, because both the honest person and the liar usually answer “yes”. You will find the answer to that question in the process of asking other questions—and then taking the time, when you hear something suspicious, to follow it up with a lot more detailed questions and often external investigation.

For example, a man once told me that he had three degrees in a technical field. I asked him what schools, and he thought a second and named some prominent Michigan schools. I asked him some simple questions from my experience and he did have trouble with the answers. An Internet list of the schools’ graduates did not contain his name. When he was later confronted, he said, in apparent sincerity, that he “had three courses—aren’t those the same as degrees?” Of course, anyone who goes to college knows the difference between a degree and a course.

When people lie so much that they are never embarrassed by being discovered, but simply cover it up with more lies—it is very difficult to mentor them in anything. They will continually tell their mentor what they think he or she wants to hear. The mentor must reward and encourage truthfulness before much else can be accomplished. The mentor must communicate that he/she would rather hear true “horror stories” than sweet things that turn out to be partly or completely false.

- What is their work or school experience? What kinds of jobs or classes do they like and dislike? What would they like to do and accomplish with the rest of their lives? King Solomon said that people should gain satisfaction from their work (Ecclesiastes 5:18). If a person has not had successful paid work experience, ask about volunteer work, hobbies or even games they have played. How do they enjoy using their mental and physical abilities? Helping a person make the switch from hating work or not succeeding at work to enjoying successful work is one of the biggest benefits that one can help another achieve.
- What do they enjoy in life? Recreation and entertainment have a place, and are easy for most people to talk about. Sure, some past-times are harmful and expensive—replacing them is something the mentor can work on later. But it is good to know where a person stands.

- What are their hopes and dreams for the future? Do they have a plan, or do they do what those around them do or what they suggest to them? Thinking about the future is always helpful to those who are struggling now.
- How is their control of their own lives? Do they keep their possessions in order? Are they able to use their time efficiently and keep commitments? Are they largely in control of their emotions? Are they struggling with substance abuse?
- What is their relationship to God? Do they pray and/or read the Bible regularly? Do they see God as an effective force in their lives? Do they attend a church or Bible study? What is their understanding of God's purpose for their lives.

Encourage Them Where They Need It

It the process of getting to know others, it often becomes clear to them what they need to do. If not, they can be gently encouraged to focus on areas that need attention. Every person is different and there is no one formula for success for all. A mentor's job is to find where someone needs help and encouragement, and they to provide it.

Praying for Godly wisdom is vital.

Some people need to finish their high school education; others need to get their first job. Some need to get over deep hurts from their past. Others need to deal with massive present problems. Some need peace in their later years. They need to know that somebody else, and ultimately God still appreciates and loves them. In His wisdom, God has left some who cannot care for themselves, but need others to help. A wise mentor will connect able people who need purpose with those who genuinely need to be served.

Some need goals clearly laid out in front of them so that they can pursue them. Others are scared away by big goals. The astute mentor may say: "come and do this with me" without explaining the goal—and their students may find that they were able to accomplish things that they previously thought impossible.

The mentor will often encounter people who have trouble doing specific things: getting up at a certain time, filling out required forms, eating well, maintaining their vehicle, keeping their possessions neat, etc. There are dozens of others. The mentor can show them examples of people who do these things well, show them the benefits and encourage them to do it. Some will figure it out quickly; others may take longer and need to try several approaches.

Everyone needs to be encouraged to look to God and His Word. Some do not believe in God or His love—but after being exposed to a Christian mentor, they should know

something about that. Others are angry at God for what has happened in their past. Their hope can be renewed. Others believe they have a great relationship with God and all their difficulties are someone else's fault. They are often the most difficult to help.

It is easy for a mentor to think, "If I can just lead them to Christ, my purpose will be accomplished." Indeed, leading a person truthfully to Christ is a most valuable achievement. A mentor must also be careful that a person is really repenting and seeking God with his/her whole heart. It is hurtful for someone to profess Christ simply so others will think better of them or give them more. Even with genuine conversions, much of the New Testament is a story of mature believers mentoring new believers. The whole purpose of the church is edification of one another (Romans 15:1-2; 1 Corinthians 14:12,26). Mentoring is not finished at conversion!

Trouble? Make Changes or Get Help!

What should a mentor do when the process is not going well? All mentors must recognize that we all have limitations. We need to examine ourselves before God and see if there is something that we can do differently. It is generally a mistake to continue to try a method that has not worked. When one fails, prayerfully consider another.

One thing a Mentor should teach is the humility to get help when one has trouble. This is true whether the trouble occurs in the mentoring or somewhere else in the mentor's life. The mentor should not try to put up a good image and make it look like there is no trouble, but he or she should set the example of how to get help. A Mentor might say to his student: "We have talked about how to keep important papers in order and we are still having trouble finding them when they are needed. I've brought Bob, my accountant friend, to help us. He earns a lot of money by keeping papers in order."

Ultimately, we must realize that the power of God and individual desire are the only things that make lasting changes in lives. If a mentoring relationship is not producing good after some months, it is usually better to end it and let God work in a different way. We can be happy to be one good Christian witness in the life of another—who knows when they will actually accept the love of God. It is the life of the Christian to walk as Christ walked (1 John 2:6):

We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. For even Christ did not please himself but, as it is written: "The insults of those who insult you [God] have fallen on me." (Romans 15:1-3).

PABC Helps USA Citizens Only!

A few times, PABC has been asked to provide housing for individuals who were either clearly not or probably not citizens of any state of the USA. In all but one case, PABC has refused to give them shelter. Why?

Indeed, all people are made in the image of God, have the same human needs and have the same potential for eternal life. So why do we treat them differently?

The Bible teaches the rule of law. The laws of the land were written on large stones for everyone to see (Deuteronomy 27:1-4). The laws were for everyone, not just the “common people”. Even the King was commanded to write his own copy of the law, to read it daily and to live by it (Deuteronomy 17:16-18). Today, Some PABC guests have suffered because of living somewhat lawless lives. So, PABC spends a considerable amount of time encouraging its Guests to follow the laws of our land and the PABC rules. What kind of example is it when PABC helps someone whose presence in the State of Michigan is a violation of our law?

This writer realizes that the current Executive branch of our country is attempting to define certain classes of aliens (the name the law uses for them) who will not be deported or prosecuted for violating our immigration laws and other classes who will. All of this has been done without Congress actually changing the law. Many conservative legislators, law professors and others see this as a very dangerous step. With the stroke of a pen on internal department regulations, our government is claiming the right to move millions of people back and forth between criminal and non-criminal status without any of the normal procedures for enacting laws. These are the very kinds of problems from which our founding fathers sought to escape when they separated from the English government and signed the Declaration of Independence.

Furthermore, it would still be a violation of federal law for PABC staff to harbor someone known to be an alien. This can be found in the United States Code: 8 USC 1324, available from the Cornell Legal Information Institute here: <http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/8/1324>. While people are rarely prosecuted for this today, it is nevertheless still illegal and prosecutable.

Sometimes, people ask to live at PABC when they have another reasonable place that they could live. They may find PABC nicer, easier or cheaper than their alternatives. But in nearly all of those cases, PABC encourages them to be more self-sufficient and refused to let them stay so they will have to use their alternatives. The same is true for aliens in the country illegally.

Nearly all illegal aliens can go back home. They are not in legal trouble there and usually our Homeland Security will give them a free ride back if they turn themselves in. They should work toward better economic conditions in their own country. If they genuinely need aid, **Christians should start missions in their home countries.** That would be a good ministry—but it is not PABC's ministry right now.

Also, PABC must consider the safety of its other Guests whenever it accepts someone. If a local person commits a crime, it is relatively easy for law enforcement to find them. They have a state ID and usually use banking or some kind of government service that makes them easy to track. They have local friends and relatives that may reveal their location. This produces a powerful deterrent to committing crimes. But aliens are very difficult for anyone to find. If they have purchased one false government ID, it is it is no more difficult to purchase another—with a different name. Aliens from the same country are used to helping them hide—and they do not exchange any information with law enforcement. They can be emboldened to commit crimes because they know that there is little chance of them being caught if they change their identification and flee to another area.

In one case about two years ago, PABC provided shelter to a man who spoke with a foreign accent, but had a Michigan driver's license. However, the name on the license was not exactly the same as his name on other documents and the license color was somewhat different than normal Michigan driver's licenses. No further inquiry was made into the validity of the license because he claimed to be an honest, hardworking man who had been defrauded by all of his friends and had nobody left to help. But after a few days, the man disappeared without letting anyone know, and so did some of the possession of the man who stayed across the hall from him. When a PABC staff member later saw him working in another city, he was embarrassed and attempted to hide.

We are not claiming that all non-USA citizens are liars, thieves or criminals. However, we are saying that the present laws of our land make it very difficult to work with people who are non-citizens. We encourage our legislatures to fix our outdated and often-disobeyed immigration laws. We encourage our executive branches to follow the laws that have been passed. We also encourage people to remain in the countries where they are legal citizens, so they can help and take care of their own people. If anyone here in Michigan still feels strongly about helping homeless people from other countries, we will gladly keep their contact information and refer undocumented individuals to them. They can either provide them a motel or take them into their own homes.

All the Way Down & Getting Up!

When a person becomes homeless due to committing crimes, substance abuse, evictions, bankruptcy or other big mistakes, it is not easy to recover. Their path is much more difficult than it would have been had they never had such troubles. But their only good solution is to get back up! Christians need to understand the problems so they can help those facing these difficult challenges. Think about where you can help:

Jobs: Many jobs are simply not available to those with felony records, sex offences, drug use histories or even bad credit. Only one felony can be expunged and it takes 4 years. Sex offence records often stay from 25 years to life. Many employers legally use credit reports in their hiring decisions. Professionals with an advanced degrees who get severely behind in their student loans may never get out of debt for the rest of their lives. If they are forced to take low paying jobs outside their field, they may not be able to pay even the interest on their student loans.

Housing: Similarly, many living units are not available to those who have felony records, previous evictions, bad credit or sex offenses. Even many federally funded programs designed to help the poor will not help find housing for men and women with these rather common difficulties.

False Accusations: When one person accused another of theft, assault or battery and the accused has no criminal record, charges are not usually filed unless there are multiple clear witnesses. But if those same accusations were made against someone with a previous felon, he might find himself in jail on the testimony of one witness—held on bail that he cannot pay. He might lose his job and his house because of it. If the evidence is found insufficient and the charges dropped, he will not be compensated unless he files a lawsuit—which he certainly cannot afford.

Family Separation: A troubled past frequently includes broken families and many court visits about child support and custody issues. These consume much time and money. People who do not diligently cooperate with courts can lose custody of their children. People on the sex offender registries, even though they may be thoroughly recovered, may not be able to see their own children without supervision until they are grown. False accusations are also a problem with family issues. An accusation that would be ignored for most parents may result in children being taken away from a person with a criminal or drug history. Even for the innocent parent, there are costs and things to do to get their children back.

We have had several Guests come to PABC who were “way down” like this— **and they have gotten back up!**

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