



Bonnie Smith, Ministry Coordinator
 651-457-2477—Bonnie@StarfishMN.org
 www.StarfishMN.org
 3540 75th Street East, Inver Grove Heights, MN 55076

Newsletter

A ministry associated with Classis Lake Superior of the Christian Reformed Church in North America

Spring 2011

Board of Directors

Trudy Ash, Pease CRC,
Pease
 Ann Eggegeen, Faith CRC,
New Brighton
 Teena Kilbury, Christian and
Missionary Alliance,
Milaca
 Sheryll Kjos, Pease CRC,
Pease
 Randy Kroll, Faith CRC,
New Brighton
 Julie Lynch, Grace CRC,
Inver Grove Hghts
 Adam Sexton, Eagan Hills
Alliance Church,
Eagan
 Laurie Sexton, At Large,
Inver Grove Hghts
 Archie VanderHart,
Pastoral Advisor,
Faith CRC,
New Brighton
 Paul Vliem, Calvary CRC,
Edina
 Nathaniel Zylstra, Calvary
CRC, Edina

Inside this issue:

Deacons' Page: Do Our Churches Serve the Poor?	2
Volunteer's Page: Maintaining Bounda- ries	3
Treasurer's Report	2
Tham Hin Refugee Camp	4

New Life Community Center Open House

On May 7, supporters of Starfish Ministries' KaRen community development effort attended an Open House at the New Life Community Center (NLCC) — the hub of activity for this outreach.

Overview

During the overview, guests heard about the Tham Hin Refugee Camp in Thailand — one of the camps from which the KaRen were allowed to emigrate to the United States. **(See article on the back.)**

They also met Rutha Kyi, an English-speaking KaRen staff hired under the AmeriCorps program. As a result of interviews with the KaRen, we've begun several programs: English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, vocabulary help for high school students, and gardening for families. On June 7, we will begin a Math Club for elementary and middle school students who are struggling in that area. Contacts are also being made with potential employers to help find living wage work.

English as a Second Language



A presentation was given by Jeanette Stohlmann, instructor, about the ESL program offered at the



NLCC. She highlighted the differences between our ESL class and others offered in St. Paul. Ours is not government funded so we are free to include Christian worship and world view. It is less intense and more one-on-one which better meets the needs of those who find the government-sponsored mandatory 20 hours a week too difficult.

WordSmart

We also demonstrated the WordSmart vocabulary software used by KaRen high school students to improve their reading and writing. Guests were allowed to try their hand at this interactive program.

Gardening

Those who were interested were given a tour map which led them past the community gardens in Maplewood where 13 of our families are growing vegetables as well as other resources and housing in the neighborhood.

New Life CRC, a southeast Asian church, provided the refreshments including egg rolls, Chinese buns, black sweet sticky rice and punch.

Starfish Ministries is planning another Open House in the fall. Plan now to attend.

Deacon's Page

Do Our Churches Serve the Poor?

Henry Nouwen, in his book Bread for the Journey, says this about the poor:

“Those who are marginal in the world are central in the church, and that is how it is supposed to be! The homeless, the starving, parentless children, people with AIDS, our emotionally disturbed brothers and sisters — they require our first attention.

“The church will always be renewed when our attention shifts from ourselves to those who need our care. The blessing of Jesus always comes to us through the poor.”

Deacons have the particular responsibility to lead the congregation into a ministry of mercy and compassion with “the poor.” They are to keep the needs of the poor clearly before the church.

Who are the poor in our congregations? Today, poor people include those who are financially poor as well as those who have other needs: social (the lonely and isolated), emotional (the depressed and those experiencing grief), relational (those affected by divorce, including the children) and more.

The deacons are blessed with tremendous partners for their ministry: the pastor, the elders, pastoral care workers, friends and family. With the growth of small group ministries, some are



experiencing the community of care through their small group. The job of the deacon is to ensure that appropriate care is being provided—not to do it all themselves.

Who are the poor in our communities? “The poor” in our communities are also part of the responsibility of the church. And today, in light of the changes in the economy and the approach of the government toward the poor, **the church will be challenged as never before.**

Choosing to make the poor a priority. We know how to work with the poor; we need to make it a priority in our own community. How can we help to bring hope to the poor in Jesus’ name?

1. Decide which people in the church need special attention by the deacons and focus on them; ensuring that the rest are given appropriate help by other caregivers in the church.
2. Devote one-third to one-half of the deacons’ time to community ministry.
3. Start somewhere, not everywhere. Discover a few needs in your community to focus on, then

work with those families over the long term.

4. Re-elect experienced deacons to help in this vital area; this work requires people with some experience in ministry.

Henry Nouwen says “...those who are marginal in the world are central in the church.” How can we work together to make sure this is true in our churches?

[Adapted from PARTNERS in ministry, a newsletter of Diaconal Ministries of Eastern Canada, Vol. 4, No. 1, Sept. 1997]

Treasurer's Report

For July 1, 2010, thru April 30, 2011

<u>Income</u>	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Actual</u>
Churches	\$10,667	\$ 8,203
Classis M.S.	13,854	17,838
Grants	16,667	30,000
Individuals	41,500	20,623
Miscellaneous	0	9
Total Income	\$82,688	\$76,664
Expenses	<u>\$82,329</u>	<u>\$77,330</u>
Difference	\$ 359	\$- 666

Your financial support of Starfish Ministries is always needed.

There are multiple ways you can give:

- Credit Card—log onto www.StarfishMN.org and clicking on the “Donate” button. It will take you to our page on GiveMN.org.
- Check—mail to Treasurer, Starfish Ministries, 3540 75th Street East, Inver Grove Heights, MN 55076.
- Matching—if your employer has a matching program, just identify us as the Eastern Minnesota Deacons Association doing business as Starfish Ministries, MN Tax Exempt No. ES 36110.

Any and all support at whatever level is always appreciated.

Volunteer's Page

Burdens and Loads

"Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ...For all must carry their own loads." Galatians 6:2, 5

These two verses seem to be contradictory. We are to bear one another's burdens but each is to carry his or her own load.

The Greek word for *burden* means something that is exceedingly heavy and troublesome. It is the kind of burden that can weigh people down and crush them — the kind people carry in times of crisis when their troubles seem ready to overwhelm them.

On the other hand, the Greek word translated as *load* means the cargo or normal daily weight that a person carries. If you look at grade school children crowding into the school in the morning, you'll see they are able to manage their own backpacks; they don't need others to share that weight.

So the Scriptures call us to share the crushing weight of the burdens that come into other's lives but to take responsibility for our own daily load and encourage others to take responsibility for theirs.

Some people act as if their burdens were just loads. They struggle under the terrible weight of tragedies and crises and refuse to allow others to share their burdens. Others exaggerate the weight of their daily load, refuse to take responsibility for carrying it, and try to find others who will take over their responsibilities.

Mixing up burdens and loads are the result of boundary problems. God wants all of us to distinguish



between burdens and loads. We are to take appropriate responsibility for ourselves but also to be willing to help carry other's burdens as necessary.

But that isn't where God's interest stops. Jesus also offers to share our burdens. Listen to what he says:

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30). Jesus wants to share our burdens. The image he uses is a yoke — the frame that linked two oxen together and helped them share their work. We put on the yoke and find that Jesus is right there beside us, pulling with us, sharing the wearying work, helping to carry our burdens.

Sometimes our loads are heavier than other times but God graciously enables us to carry them. There come times in everyone's life, however, when they are weighed down with burdens. During those crushing times, we, as Christians, embody Christ — we find ourselves in the yoke and we see the face of Jesus in the sister or brother who is yoked with us.

In order to care effectively for oth-

ers, we need to maintain healthy boundaries in our relationships, as follows:

Don't try to take over another's life. This may seem pretty obvious but it does need to be said. At times we can take over others' lives believing we are making their life easier and better.

Our need to care for others may cause us to keep them in a dependent state. As long as their problems continue, their need for us continues. Such behavior is called enabling. Relating like that is not caring, it is self-centered and destructive.

Avoid manipulation. Some people may be very needy and have trouble maintaining boundaries. They may try to get you to take responsibility for them so they don't have to take responsibility for themselves. But you cannot be responsible for them; your responsibility is to care within reasonable limits.

The assertive response to manipulative requests is gently but firmly to refuse to go along.

Know your limits. What if you learned your care receiver is suicidal, deeply depressed, suffering from a severe mental illness, or abusing herself or her children? How would you stay within your boundaries? Maintaining reasonable boundaries means limiting yourself to the care you are qualified to give. Making referrals to others is the way to ensure that your care receiver gets the care they need when it's beyond your capacity to give.

[continued on the back]



BONNIE SMITH, MINISTRY COORDINATOR
651-457-2477—BONNIE@STARFISHMN.ORG
WWW.STARFISHMN.ORG
3540 75TH STREET EAST, INVER GROVE
HEIGHTS, MN 55076



Tham Hin Refugee Camp

Many of the KaRen who live here came from the Tham Hin Refugee Camp in Thailand. When they arrived in the camp, they were given a small supply of bamboo with which to build themselves a shelter. Once a year, they were given a small supply of clothing. The United Nations provided food consisting of rice, yellow beans, oil and salt. Without any income or opportunities to work, their access to additional food was limited.

In the camp, 95% of the people are KaRen and 90% of them are Christian. Being KaRen and being Christian are the major reasons they are being forced out of their own country by the military government. Refugees risk arrest and return to Burma if they venture outside the camp. But many of them take this risk in order to find additional sources of income and food. Threats of attack on the refugee camps were often made from the Burmese and Thai military which increased feelings of vulnerability.

During our interviews, we asked them about the dreams they had for their lives in the U.S. Most cited freedom and safety for their families and education and good jobs for their children. Despite the difficulty in finding jobs and the struggle to adapt to our economic structure, they are happy to be in the United States and feel that they are making progress toward those dreams.

Burdens and Loads [cont. from inside]

Help others establish and strengthen boundaries. Some people may need help establishing and strengthening their boundaries. They are often quite vulnerable to being hurt or manipulated. All their internal energy is being used just to make it from day to day and they don't have resources left to maintain healthy boundaries. A part of your care, therefore, might be to help them build or mend boundaries.

People need to feel cared for and confident in order to maintain boundaries. Listening, prayers, and unconditional positive regard will help others gain the internal resources needed to build and maintain healthy boundaries.

Another way you will help is to model healthy boundaries. Gently and firmly responding to inappropriate requests or actions helps others identify ways of setting their own limits. In the same way, you need to respect others' responses to your requests and/or actions.

[Adapted from Stephen Ministry's Maintain Boundaries in Caregiving," Module 17, published by Zondervan Publishing, 2000].