



# OPENING DOORS<sup>sm</sup>

A Prison Ministry

December 2005

## I Have Placed Before You An Open Door (Rev. 3:8)

A word from Deborah L. Roeger, Executive Director



Only God can take an assignment we never wanted to do and turn it into a most enjoyable task! I'm finding that is what He has done with the writing of our Newsletters. The first

one was a painstaking effort taking many months to finish and more re-writes than I could count. Only when Dr. Marshall Hayden, my pastor, "coached" me in a Halftime coaching role play did I sense the true urgency with which God had placed this task on my list of things to do. It was finally completed after much additional prayer and effort. For that I am very thankful to Marshall! Now I find that I can hardly wait until the next month's edition to share with you the stories we are receiving. Such is the case with December's edition as you meet Barbara, Jonathan and Neil. We trust they will bring Christmas, indeed Christ-like, blessings into your life as much as they have already brought into ours.♥

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 Stand In The Gap<sup>tm</sup> Through The Eyes Of.....
- 2 A True North Experience!
- 2 True North by Twila Paris
- 2 God Is The Open Door At The End Of Our Broken Dreams
- 3 Prayer Requests and Volunteer Needs

## Stand In The Gap<sup>tm</sup> Through The Eyes Of .....

When I left prison on June 8, 2000, I had a 12" fan, a 13" TV, a 20 oz. insulated coffee mug, a medium Tupperware® bowl, the clothes on my back, the shoes on my feet, a 30-day supply of blood pressure pills, some journals and a tattered Bible. I had no family, nowhere to live, no car, and no driver's license. When I moved to Tulsa I knew no one. That was intentional. I wasn't going back to my past. I wasn't going to have any more knives thrown at my head! What I did have was

***My life had been lived in fear of the next bad thing that was going to happen. I was a survivor of incest, alcoholism, domestic violence and prison.***

my faith in God. My mentor wasn't sure what Stand In The Gap<sup>tm</sup> did but encouraged me to call them. I moved to Tulsa on a Friday, called on a Monday, we met on Tuesday and SITG<sup>tm</sup> has been part of my life since. First I was a neighbor, and then a consultant and now I work there. What Stand in the Gap<sup>tm</sup> did for me was provide a safe place to learn how to live a Christian life and the opportunity to associate with healthy Christian people. SITG<sup>tm</sup> provided role models of how to live, clean and sober in the free world. There is no doubt in my mind that I was led to Tulsa. My life had been lived in fear of the next bad thing that was going to happen. I was a survivor of incest, alcoholism, domestic violence and prison; but there is more to life than simply "surviving." While there are many survivor groups and recovery programs, there are no programs teaching "normal." I knew exactly what not to do when I got out of prison. I knew there would be no more alcohol, drugs or abusive men for me, but I didn't

*continued on page 3*

## A True North Experience!

I attended an Opening Doors<sup>sm</sup> event in July 2003 and could not have been more impressed. The programme is sensitively designed to guide participants on a journey into deeper relationships of trust and community. People were safe to share and give of themselves, sometimes in ways that were deeply felt, and there was much fun and laughter! It reminded me of the saying that, "joy is the serious business of heaven." Every day had its 'magic moments'. Although my Opening Doors<sup>sm</sup> was over two years ago, I see the names and the faces of the men I spent it with in my mind's eye as I write. At the very end, a treasure chest was passed around and we each took something from the items contained to give to the person next to us. The chap next to me ("Super Sam") gave me a compass saying, "This is so you can find your way back to us". One day I will. But in the meantime I've written a book called "My Brother's Keeper" to help others find their way back to what I experienced. Our priority should not be to build more prisons, but to rebuild more prisoners. On the compass of prison reform, Opening Doors<sup>sm</sup> points true north".♥ Written by Jonathan Burnside, Professor of Law, University of Bristol, England.

**Editor's Note:** Jonathan book, "My Brother's Keeper Faith-based units in prisons" was published in October, 2005. It is promoted as: "an authoritative . . . analysis of what works and what doesn't in faith-based units around the world. The book presents a vision of justice that is not just concerned with building more prisons but with rebuilding more prisoners."

## TRUE NORTH

I remember well sitting in the gift box circle when Jonathan received the compass from Super Sam during that Opening Doors<sup>sm</sup> program at MCI. Jonathan's reflection of the experience (see article above "A True North Experience") brings to mind the fitting refrain from a Twila Paris song:

*True North  
There's a strong steady light that is guiding us home  
True North  
In the lingering night we were never alone  
We need an absolute compass  
now more than ever before  
True north, True north*

## God Is The Open Door At The End Of Our Broken Dreams

### ***A Brother is Always a Brother***

*At that point Peter got up the nerve to ask, "Master, how many times do I forgive a brother or sister who hurts me? Seven?" Jesus replied, "Seven! Hardly. Try seventy times seven." Matthew 18:21-22 (The Message)*

As my time in the Marion Correctional Horizon Dorm program came to an end, I was asked to stay and be an "encourager" to the next group of men coming in the next year. After much prayer, I decided to stay. My best friend, who had moved into the Faith-Based Dorm with me, wanted me to go to a cellblock with him. When he found out I was staying, he did everything he could to discourage me. He told me I was crazy, that I would make a terrible encourager. When I explained that this is what I felt the Lord was leading me to do, he left the dorm angry and refused to speak to me for a couple weeks. As I saw him in the halls throughout the weeks, I would always speak to him and try to encourage him. He would always have something negative or hateful to say. As I became discouraged at this situation, the Lord brought to mind our promise to always use the tools we learned in Opening Doors<sup>sm</sup>. We were both in the same (Kairos) share group every week, so I started thinking outside the box. When he would say hateful things, I would respond with how that made me feel. Then I would always add "regardless of what you say, I still love you as my brother." I decided to refuse to take anything he said personally. Instead I would respond in love and try to share all the wonderful things that God was doing in my life, which I believe was the result of my faithfulness to His desire in my life. You have to understand that this was not what others who knew me in the past expected. They, as well as my brother, expected me to eventually respond in my old manner, with anger and aggression. But the Lord had given me the tools I needed, via Opening Doors<sup>sm</sup>, to live a life that was pleasing to Him. Almost two years passed before my friend was diagnosed with manic-depressive disorder. He shared with me that over the past two years he had alienated everyone that he used to be close to, except for me. God opened the door to allow me to minister to my brother and help him along his path toward living a life that was pleasing to God. Great news! As I was writing this devotional, my brother called from Marion Correctional. He is going home on January 9, 2006. His first question to me was to ask if I

*continued on page 4*

## COMING UP IN OUR NEXT NEWSLETTER:

- ♥ Opening Doors<sup>sm</sup> through the eyes of a prison Warden
- ♥ Why inmates recommend Opening Doors<sup>sm</sup> to others

## PRAYER REQUESTS:

- † Our first two SITG spiritual families in Ohio which began meeting in November
- † New funding sources
- † Program Directors for:
  - Stand In The Gap,<sup>tm</sup> Ohio (SITG)
  - Opening Doors prison programs
- † Contractual Relationships with licensed Christian counselors to support SITG<sup>tm</sup>
- † Corporate partnerships to loan facilitators allowing expansion of Opening Doors In The Workplace<sup>sm</sup>
- † Expansion of prison prayer teams and Prayers For Prisoners<sup>sm</sup> ministry

## VOLUNTEER NEEDS:

- ◆ Program facilitators for adult & youth inmate programs and staff programs
- ◆ Prayer partners – if you can pray you are qualified!
  - Intercessors to pray for individual inmate prayer requests from women's prisons at Marysville and Trumbull
  - Intercessors to join prayer teams that meet regularly inside various prisons; the newest team meets at Scioto Juvenile Correctional Facility
- ◆ Coordinator for inmate prayer requests

know how to transition to a normal, full, feeling life. Many people get stuck in surviving and never get out. They may not go back to abusive relationships and old addictions, but they never take the next step of living moment to moment, trusting God and believing they are safe. Through my spiritual family, Stand In The Gap<sup>tm</sup> taught me how to trust God, how to keep believing, how to move from merely surviving to living my life. I can't take credit for my achievement; I didn't do it. God did. All I had to do was trust, believe and

---

### *The love of God expressed through the people of God transformed my life.*

---

listen. On a Tuesday I moved into the condo I had purchased. I had absolutely no bedroom furniture; I was sleeping on an air mattress on the floor. On Thursday the prayer in my spiritual family was "Dear Lord, you have heard Barbara's needs. Please bless her at her point of need." On Friday a bed, complete with headboard and footboard, mattress and box springs was delivered to the condo and set up. Within three days of the time we prayed a dresser, two end tables and a chair from 4 totally different sources were all delivered to my condo absolutely free. I know God has a sense of humor – all of my new furniture matched; it was all teak and rattan! I still have my cup, bowl, TV and fan but I have so much more. I have my condo, a comfortable bed, nice clothes, good food, a 2001 Kia, and a 25-inch color TV. I had to change my life otherwise the time I spent in prison would have been wasted; my life there would have been wasted. The love of God expressed through the people of God transformed my life.♥ By Barbara Saunders, Tulsa, Oklahoma, M.A. Art, M.A. Counseling Psychology; B.S. Nursing

Editorial Note: Barbara now walks out her faith in God serving as the Administrator for Stand In The Gap<sup>tm</sup> Tulsa and helping other neighbors in need by co-leading a spiritual family. Her story is a powerful testimony to the fact that the miraculous happens when the power of God's love flows freely through other believers. That's the power of a Stand In The Gap<sup>tm</sup> spiritual family. It really is that simple! Will you pray and ask God how you can become involved?

Opening Doors of Ohio, Inc.  
~ A Prison Ministry ~  
P.O. Box 281  
Lewis Center, OH 43035-0281  
Deb.Roeger@OpeningMoreDoors.org  
614-543-0417 • 614-361-6783

NON-PROFIT  
US POSTAGE  
PAID  
PERMIT No. 143  
LEWIS CENTER,  
OH 43035

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Mailing Address  
Street Number and Name  
City, State 98765-4321

*Continued from page 2*

could help him find a Stand In The Gap™ spiritual family to surround him when he is released. For GOD so loved the world that He gave His only Son that we might live. What sacrifices are we willing to make to assure that our brothers and sisters have the opportunity to live a life that is pleasing to GOD?

- Neil Salyer

Scripture References: Psalm 103 Eccl. 27: 30- 28: 7 Romans 14: 5-12 and Matthew 18: 21-35

Neil is a former resident at Marion Correctional where he first participated in Opening Doors<sup>sm</sup> through the Horizon Program. He became an Opening Doors<sup>sm</sup> facilitator and upon his release was invited to become a member of the Board of Directors for Opening Doors of Ohio, Inc. He is currently active as Outreach Director for his local church, a member of the Board of Directors for Grace Place Ministries, and a member of a Stand In The Gap,™ Ohio spiritual family.

## HEARING FROM YOU

If you have suggestions or questions for us or if you know of someone else who would appreciate receiving our Newsletter, please e-mail me at the address below. Because we believe good stewardship of our resources is important, please inform us should you decide you no longer want to receive our Newsletter. We will honor your request by removing your name from our mailing list.

Deborah L. Roeger,  
Executive Director

**P.S.** For our continuing readers, please keep us informed of any address changes so that you won't miss future issues of our Newsletter. Just knowing you are there and you care is a great encouragement to us and our growing group of volunteers.

**Note our new e-mail address:**  
[deb.roeger@OpeningMoreDoors.org](mailto:deb.roeger@OpeningMoreDoors.org)

614-543-0417 • 614-361-6783