

March 2013

“What great thing would you wait for if you knew God would not fail you...?”

-Waiting, Ben Paterson

Dear Friends,

Thank you for taking the time to read this newsletter.

“This past Saturday marked the anniversary of the loss of my full-term pregnancy,” she said. I looked at her eyes - filled with tears and expressing deep sorrow. The pain had been swelling in her heart since the weekend when she attended the marriage of her niece. The wedding feast was her idea because it helped her focus on building someone else’s happiness. She was not expecting that it would also be a day of deep bereavement when a guest at the wedding shared that she was pregnant with a baby due on the same date that she had lost her pregnancy.



This was a festive occasion with family and friends and much joy in the air! Yet the interactions of parents holding, hugging, and playing with their children served as painful reminders of what she had lost. She looked at me and said, “Life for all the people around me seemed so free, so full of life, and while I was happy for them I could not escape the anguish I felt at the moment.” I have been a witness to her many losses as I have walked alongside her now for some time.

Quietly, I prayed for wisdom, and if I were to speak any words, how could I bring comfort to her...? After allowing time for her deep sorrow to be expressed through words and tears, I sought permission to ask her a question, which she allowed. “*What great thing would you wait for if you knew God would not fail you...?*” I prefaced my question by saying that I had to answer the question myself earlier that morning. She paused and said, “I want complete certainty that I will have eternal life.” I was shocked, because her answer was so close to how I responded to the question earlier that day. God had given me special insight into her heart and she responded with hope.

Before we ended our time together, I asked her if there was anything else I could do for her. She looked at me soberly and said, “Elizabeth, everything I needed from you today, you gave to me. Thank you.” She smiled.

She reminds us that faith is less about our ability to hold onto God, and more about simply trusting in His ability to hold onto us.

You, our dear partners, know that this woman could have been broken had she not been filled with the life of hope in Christ. This is the ministry of hope you are sharing with us.

More reasons to hope...

There are many new reasons to hope regarding the ministry of The Place of Refuge:

- We conducted training on our trauma counseling model at **Tenth Presbyterian Church's Urban Ministries Conference** in early March.
- I recently spoke on advocacy at the **Christian Legal Clinics of Philadelphia Pro Deo Conference**.
- We will welcome **two new graduate interns** who will be with us for one year beginning this summer, getting training and experience in trauma counseling.
- **Two new bilingual therapists** have joined our team, answering a need for the many bilingual clients we serve.
- Since December, we have been working earnestly with Del Wesley, a **local professional development consultant** to boost our fundraising efforts.
- I will speak about our faith model at the 7th Annual Faith and Spiritual Affairs Post Conference entitled "**Journey for a Lifetime: A Collective Conversation for Healing**" sponsored by the Philadelphia Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual Disability Services (DBHIDS) on April 24th. I have also been invited to participate on their **Faith Advisory Board**.
- Board Chair Rev. Luis Centeno was honored at **The Justice Conference** in February for his pioneering urban ministry work, and The Place of Refuge was recognized by the **Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's State Senator Shirley M. Kitchen** from the 3rd District for raising mental health awareness in the community.

Waiting in hope...

Although we met 100% of our program revenue goal for last year—a figure that grew by 39% (!) from the year before, and despite the fact that we met our goals with support from churches and pledges, *we were thrown a curve ball* when we finished the year with a shortfall in our goal for foundation support. Three foundations who supported our work either shifted priorities or suddenly ceased operations.

What this means to our budget—**we are earnestly seeking support of \$25,000 to overcome our current deficit**. While we wait for new opportunities already in motion to bear fruit in the form of increased support, *we are significantly behind in payroll*. Yet, we are here every day working harder than ever. The Lord continues to bless us with new partnerships and wonderful growth, and may I say, a joy that is our strength. The doors are opening wider every day.

My dear friends, you have been so incredibly supportive of us throughout our journey. It is with much reverence and respect for you that I make this request for new and ongoing financial support. We must continue to march forward and persevere to overcome the forces of darkness we face daily – both in the lives of those we serve and the challenges we face in continuing this work. In my heart, I know our Lord will fulfill His promises to us—that He will have a witness of His light and His life in the dark places of the world. You are His instruments in this work with us.

Never a more critical time for us, never a better opportunity...

A local foundation has generously promised to match every dollar that comes in as part of this appeal!!

...more ways you can help.

- Pray that God will bring new clients to fill 20 open slots, resulting in the additional program revenue needed to fulfill our budget. This will involve an increase from our current six

appointments per day to ten. Pray specifically that God will bring clients referred through our new partnership with Esperanza's EARN Center.

- Host a benefit luncheon or dessert to give your friends or members of your church a real opportunity to hear more about The Place of Refuge and become donors. Our board members have graciously offered to come and speak at one of these events.

My friends, thank you!

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Hernandez, M.A.
Executive Director

Match this gift!!

The Place of Refuge
P.O. Box 60895
Philadelphia, PA 19133

THE PLACE OF REFUGE
**Putting your concern and compassion into
ACTION!**

Yes, Elizabeth! I want to help *The Place of Refuge* take action to heal the hurting people of Philadelphia through professional, faith-based counseling.

I have enclosed my gift of:

\$25 \$50 \$100 \$_____

Sign me up to receive the eNewsletter!

My email address is: _____

Contributions may also be made online at www.placeofrefuge.net.

Thank you for your support. All gifts are tax deductible and will go to the ongoing work and outreaches of *The Place of Refuge*, a 501(c)3 non-profit agency located at 2938 N. 5th Street, Philadelphia, PA 19133. For more information, please visit our website: www.placeofrefuge.net.