

Dear Friends,

How often do we receive encouragement to close our eyes and step out, to step forward in the midst of overwhelming difficulties? We wrestle and toil knowing only that we are working towards a goal. Here at The Place of Refuge, each day we come across men and women from all walks—and many who have reached the end of their road.

“Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.”
(Hebrews 12:15)



Tony has been in a cycle of suffering now for over three years, not that his early years were easy, not by a long shot. He and his two brothers were raised by a single mother. They were truly needy. Is there any mark of neediness greater than a lack of food? This was his childhood. When I met Tony he told me his two fears: God and food. He told me that he knows the look of hunger—do you? Do I? In the mirror and in his brother’s faces, he learned of this. When he was old enough, he became a construction worker, and for 20 years he worked hard. He was a builder—the father of four sons and a daughter. After years of labor, his life fell again when he had his first heart attack, followed by his second, and then a third. After two years of unemployment and homelessness, Refuge was his last attempt to reach out. He was hanging by a thin thread. It is humbling to sit across from a man of strength like this. His skin is dark reflecting the tropical island he left behind, and he is very discerning, and his voice is very strong. To hear his voice as he recounts the details of this fight he is in is difficult.

He looks at his hands. This man has lost all control over the circumstances of his life. He feels again the bitter infirmity of his youth. Again, he knows hunger—but it is worse this time, having tasted the cup of plenty. There is longing now for things that have slipped from his grasp, along with the hunger.

No stronger image exists of a man who has lost it all than that of our Lord—His hands and His feet bound to the cross. But it is through His victory that the hands of the body of Christ were awakened in this world and were blessed to carry out His works through which many are fed. We are His hands and feet.

Recently, when we met, I was so reminded of this. Tony said, “When I leave here, I review and repeat again and again your words and advice, but soon, like a battery it begins to lose its power—then I wait until we meet again. The Place of Refuge is my lifeline.”

As I hear his words, suddenly every trial and battle in our ministry is not as important as this moment. The fire awakes again and I am refreshed, remembering that we are here because of Christ’s

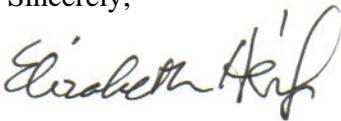
mercy. Yes, we are a mental health clinic. And yes, we must be extremely professional in our clinical treatments and practices. But in our practice we must stand apart somewhat from the norms set by others in our profession. A way forward is not possible without sacrifice. I am so happy to share these things with you, and I cannot thank you enough for how your support encourages us to continue to work to faithfully honor His name.

As you pray, please consider these new developments on our doorstep.

- **In thanks** to our three dynamic graduating interns from 2013-2014, Dana Ergenbright, Trish Kinkle and Marianne Millen, whom we pray come ever closer to knowing his full purpose for their careers and lives.
- **And in answer to prayer**—our commitment to training new professional clinicians has again been blessed with a season of growth, now with four new additions, Megan Freedell, Stephanie Rodriguez, Yesenia Rodriguez, and Carla Contreras, starting simultaneously over the coming terms, each bicultural and bilingual—certainly a first for our ministry.
- **New outreach efforts**—The Department of Behavioral Health’s Faith & Spiritual Affairs Coalition has included Refuge in a new city-wide initiative to build up the city’s care workers by providing an upcoming training on the wise use of faith interventions in therapy.
- **Upcoming speaking engagements**—Summer Medical Institute at Tenth Presbyterian Church in center city Philadelphia and a women’s retreat for Maranatha Christian Fellowship Church in Moorestown, NJ.
- **New partnerships strengthening our care of the families we serve**—with the Children’s Crisis Treatment Center.
- **Outreach** at the upcoming Fiesta Caribeña at 4th Street and Lehigh Avenue on August 9th
- Pray that our story will encourage and will continue to be shared!!
- **Come see us on Facebook!** Visit us at www.facebook.com/RefugioNorthPhilly.

It is remarkable to be a witness to all that He has set in motion here—in you, in me, in Refuge, in our partners, and in the churches we serve—in this hardest of places. A city crying out desperately after all pleasures and not for the Lord. And yet each one we care for who has turned to see His face, for even one, it is a wonder to behold and no cost can be put upon it. Thank you for coming alongside us in this.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Hernandez
Executive Director