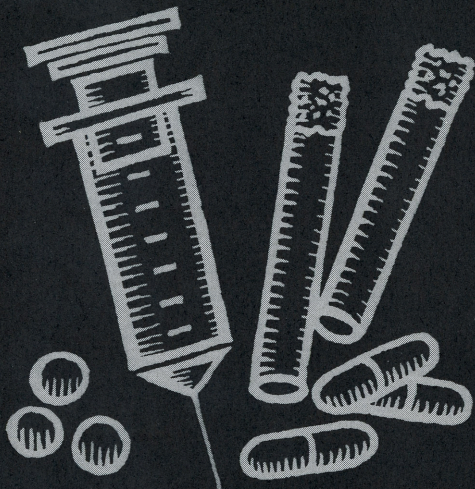


A Cry From the Depths

A UNITED THANK OFFERING STORY



"I am a drug addict. I've got no money and no friends and no place to stay. Where can I turn for help? Prison? Sure, they dry me out, then what? Right back on the stuff again. Hospital? If they take you in they just dry you out, too, but then am I really ready to take my place among the squares in my own community? Where is there someone who can help me to help myself?"

This cry from the depths of wretchedness is being answered by attempts involving two Episcopal priests. The men, the Rev. W. L. Damian Pitcaithly and the Rev. Stephen J. Chinlund, work in programs widely divergent in approach, but both are dedicated to helping drug addicts on the long road to cure.

SAMARITAN HALFWAY HOUSE

Father Pitcaithly's project, known as the Samaritan Halfway Society, has clinic headquarters in Jamaica, Long Island, New York. Co-director of the program is Rabbi Richard Schachet, a Reform Jewish rabbi.

Through a staff of skilled professionals, the Samaritan program attempts to treat the

“whole man.” This means combatting an addict’s ignorance with education, illiteracy with tutoring, emotional problems with psychiatry, lack of job skill with expert vocational training, and spiritual despair with gentle religious support for the spirit.

Father Pitcaithly’s philosophy about treatment is: “It is not enough to take away drugs from the addict so his bodily craving lessens. The craving returns unless his spirit can be strengthened to fight it.

“Some men are beyond hope, their spirits too crushed. For others, however, there is a road back. But before they can believe this they have to be made to believe in themselves. Convinced in their hearts that they can throw off the shackles of addiction, they are free to live useful lives. Neither prisons nor hospitals can inspire such belief.”

Although the Samaritan Halfway Society has encountered intense community antagonism, its work goes on and as many as 500 addicts annually have been treated during its five-year history. Father Pitcaithly claims an exceptionally high percentage of cures over a long-range period.

A United Thank Offering grant of \$20,000 is making it possible for the Society to purchase a permanent residence facility at Ancramdale, New York. On the 75-acre plot are 14 buildings which will be used by residents.

EXODUS HOUSE

In the middle of East Harlem, New York City, another narcotics treatment center is operative. Here Father Chinlund is co-director of Exodus House, a project once sponsored by the East Harlem Protestant Parish Narcotics Committee. The Parish has gained a wide reputation for fostering a successful approach to narcotics treatment.

Goals of the Exodus House rehabilitation program are two-fold. (1) It is hoped that the men will begin to lead new lives — there will be significant character development; and (2) they will want to become involved in the life of the non-addict community.

A United Thank Offering grant of \$25,000 helped make possible renovation of a tenement building now being used as a residence and rehabilitation center.

The building houses a recreation room, workshop, office space, storage areas; facilities for meeting, dining, and cooking; staff apartments, semi-dormitory space for twenty men, library and study space.

In addition, there are rooms for five men who form an ex-addicts staff and have been trained to help supervise the other non-using addicts. This intermediate staff and the residents are the decision-making group in the House, subject to final review by the professional staff.

The Exodus House approach is basically one which the East Harlem Protestant Parish has already found successful. The rehabilitation program is five-fold: Christian life, work, recreation, education, and psychotherapy. It is believed that all are needed for the complete rehabilitation of an addict with his characteristically numerous problems.

Many men come voluntarily to Exodus House from the street, but there are also many who choose to come freely from prisons where there are active programs involving a hundred men at a time.

Although there is a regular celebration of the Holy Communion on Sundays and Holy Days, attendance is not required. The men are expected, however, to involve themselves in the Bible study which follows the service. Purpose of the study is for the men to develop a critically mature attitude toward the Bible and religion in general. Many have discovered a new freedom in the group conversations.

Residents are expected to participate in a workshop in the house or house maintenance, or contribute fees from outside employment. Work experience attempts to teach positive knowledge of the rewards of meaningful labor.

Leisure time provides an opportunity for both planned and free recreation. A conscious effort is made to extend the limited horizons of the residents through exposure to new recreational experiences.

A large place is given to special tutoring structured to fit the needs of the individual, for many of the young addicts in the House have terribly limited reading proficiency. Four tutoring sessions per week, plus practice and study outside the periods, are expected.

Three group therapy sessions are held each week under professional direction.

By supporting such programs as Samaritan Halfway House and Exodus House, the United Thank Offering speaks for the Church in affirming its spiritual concern for the broken individuals who have become addicted to drugs.

UNITED THANK OFFERING STORY No. 11

Our gifts to the United Thank Offering have made and will continue to make many such differences possible in many neighborhoods throughout our nation and our world.

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