

Ten Years After
1999 - 2009



NEWSLETTER

November, 2009

www.christianfoodmission.org
E-mail: widowsinneed@comcast.net

PURSUIITS:

The following are the pursuits in which this organization is involved:

1. Distribution of meals and visitation to the elderly, especially widows.
2. Distribution of grocery orders to needy households.
3. Distribution of Bibles, tracts, booklets, and other Christian materials.
4. Accepting speaking opportunities to preach, teach, and evangelize.
5. Promotion of prayer, faith, and relationships among Christians.
6. Financial and material support of select local and foreign missionaries.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

The following people are presently voluntarily serving on our Board:

Mr. Al Moore, elder (President)
Dr. Cary Kimbrell (V. President)
Mr. David Dill (Treasurer)
Mrs. Suzanne Dykes (Secretary)
Rev. Phillip Smith
Mr. Garland Miles, deacon
Mr. John Ripley, deacon
Mr. Robert Rayburn, deacon
Mr. Robert Smith, missionary

FULL-TIME STAFF:

Greg Brown
Clark Lowery
Robert Smith

FINANCIAL POLICY AND PRACTICE:

-Under no circumstances will the ministry contract debt. We will not presume on the future, but will trust God to provide funds as needed.

-We will not state current financial needs but will share, after the fact, how God has provided for this ministry so that He alone might receive the glory.

-We will pray to God and ask Him alone to supply this ministry's financial needs; therefore, no money will be solicited nor will "fund raising" be engaged in by our Board of Directors or paid staff.

-Staff salaries are established by the Board of Directors and given only as God provides the funds. No special appeals will ever be made to obtain any salary.

-Annually, an account of all funds received and spent will be prepared and will be made available, upon request, to any desiring the same. A financial report will be publicly presented at our Annual Meeting in April of each year.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

It has been explained to many that in 1985, when the "Christian Food Mission" was officially incorporated, there was no voluntary feeding program of any kind in Jones County. We were the first. We had already opened a congregate feeding center (soup kitchen) in the dining hall prior to incorporation. It has also been explained to many that Miss Nell Davis was instrumental in establishing a companion meals-on-wheels service to the elderly through our organization. In addition we were approached by Pastor Leslie Williams and asked to house a food bank for area churches, from which needy clients could receive boxes of groceries. We were off to a quick start as we progressed and changed to meet needs in our community and county.

Three notable events have taken place which have definitely served as signposts, and have helped secure our place in the fabric of Jones County. The first event is widely known and well remembered by county residents and others whose attention was drawn to the county; the second event is known to a large circle of people who were either beneficiaries or took passing notice of an account publicized in the local media; the third event is known only to a tiny group who met in private and others who may have learned of the meeting by word-of-mouth.

THE THREE SIGNPOSTS

(1) The Jones County tornado of February 28, 1987.

A tornado cut a path of destruction through the eastern part of Jones County, especially in the Glade and Myrick communities. Providentially, our building was strategically located in east Laurel so relief could easily be sent east out Highway 84 and south down Highway 15 to the affected areas. We were perfectly positioned to address this natural disaster. This being the case, we were called upon to take on a project which we had never envisioned as part of our mission. Our plans were dramatically enlarged to allow us to focus on a more pressing, unexpected need which had arisen. The following abbreviated account of that event is drawn from my memory.

The American Red Cross approached us to receive approval for making our building a command center for all the relief work necessary. Teams and resources were dispatched from our building. The big project which demanded our constant attention and massive labors was the feeding of hundreds of people three meals a day. We were called upon to feed the residents affected by the tornado and the many workers who had arrived to clear debris and rebuild/repair houses. Week after week after week we daily prepared breakfast, lunch, and dinner, using a large number of volunteers and donated foods.

The plan that we instituted was to arrive well before daylight to cook a full breakfast, including hundreds of homemade biscuits, in our kitchen each morning. This food was put into insulated chests (called Cambros) and trucked out to the people in the affected areas. As soon as the breakfast food left, two things happened- kitchen clean-up began and everything was readied for making sandwiches. On our dining room tables hundreds of sandwiches were made and bagged for lunch by volunteers. These were picked up, with chips and cookies, and trucked out to the people. The Cambros from breakfast were left by the trucks that took the sandwiches. These were washed and the afternoon was spent cooking food for dinner. The Cambros were filled with this meal and retrieved by the trucks again.

This was an exhausting daily schedule which went on for weeks. One meal ran into another. Volunteers came from everywhere to help with the food production. Grocery stores donated food, poultry plants donated chicken, businessmen and vendors offered all sorts of products including waxed boxes in which to pack the sandwiches. There were tall stacks of flats of bread and cases of canned goods everywhere. It seemed that food arrived from everywhere, as did volunteers and offers of help.

In the midst of all this cooking and food were people sitting throughout the day in our dining hall talking on portable phones, writing on clipboards, making plans for teams of workers, and bringing in supplies. People flowed in and out of the building all day until after dark. Then we would go home to rest and think about doing it all again the next day.

The memory which remains with me, as the most striking from this daily current of restless activity, was the arrival of the Mennonite Disaster Service workers. Every morning a big group of bearded men in the plainest of work clothes arrived for breakfast. They went through the routine of not only eating but also standing to sing a song, sitting quietly and listening to a devotion from the Bible, praying, and then briefly going over their work schedule for the day. These men with their long beards and no moustaches came to serve the Lord in practical ways by

putting on roofs, clearing debris, and doing carpentry work. A team would normally come for a period of about two weeks and would immediately be replaced by another group, with no break in the project. Workers came from as far away as Indiana and Ohio! We watched these humble men and learned how to be Christians from their unselfish example.

(2) The death of Hazel Bethea Marcus on June 4, 1992.

We received notification of her death, and inclusion of the Christian Food Mission in her will, by letter on June 10, 1992. This official letter, and subsequent correspondence, came on the letterhead of "Gibbes Graves Mullins Bullock & Ferris Attorneys At Law". By reading through the minutes of the Board of Directors' meetings from 1993 and 1994 and looking over the official correspondence we received from the attorneys, it is possible to re-trace the steps which took place as a consequence of her estate distribution.

Russell Cottingham, President of the Board, and I attended a hearing on this matter on June 24, 1993 before Judge J. Shannon Clark. This court date was set to "Petition for Authority to Make Partial Distribution" of the deceased's estate. Mrs. Marcus' holdings consisted of stocks, bonds, physical properties, and cash. The Chancery Court judge agreed to release "a partial distribution" of securities to the beneficiaries. Within a few days we received into our possession two Madison County Municipal School bonds. One bond had a face value of \$50,000.00 and one had a face value of \$100,000.00!

With this sudden influx of capital we were able to transform and expand the work of the Mission. Over the next several months we purchased convection ovens, stainless steel work tables and fixtures, a second commercial stove, had a fire extinguishing system installed, etc. to outfit a sizeable new kitchen. We took bids on the necessary plumbing and electrical work to accommodate the kitchen. Also, since we were housed in an old building, we were able to upgrade wiring, lighting, and plumbing in other parts of the building which badly needed attention. At the same time we were able to replace two undependable air conditioning units with new 5-ton air handlers and upgrade needed duct work. Gordon Myrick was instrumental in guiding us through this bidding and renovation project.

Thus, in early 1994, with much improved facilities, increased cooking capacity, and the financial resources to hire additional staff, we were able to expand our services. We trucked food to Ellisville every morning and set up a second meal distribution center in that city; we began taking meals to other areas of the county and receiving clients for other services from a much wider area.

A final communication was received from the attorneys dated June 26, 1996 as a "Final Report and Petition to Close Estate". Since the taxes, attorney, accounting, and banking fees had been settled, the time had arrived to finalize the estate. It was detailed again that the Marcus estate had been assigned to two groups of beneficiaries. Half of the estate was to go to individuals referred to as the "Family Group" and the other half of the estate was to go to organizations referred to as the "Charitable Group". Under the Charitable Group were fifteen entities-charitable, educational, religious, and cultural endeavors. The Christian Food Mission had been assigned 15% of one-half of the estate.

Consequently, we received, in a single check, the amount of \$189,506.64!

We did not horde the money, nor did we spend it foolishly. Every month our Board of Directors met to carefully evaluate expenditures and analyze the services we were providing. Everyone felt confident we were honoring Mrs. Marcus' intent by meeting current pressing needs consistent with our mission. During her lifetime we had embarked on a distinct work which, at a critical time in our history, she allowed us to sustain and even greatly expand.

(3) The Board of Directors' meeting of November 18, 1999.

As a young Christian I had read the life of George Muller and was captivated by the man and his faith. Over the years he had come to mind again and again and my longing grew to receive answers to prayer like he did. By November 1999 I had finished reading the two-volume work on the life of Hudson Taylor by Dr. & Mrs. Howard Taylor. Hudson Taylor reminded me of George Muller in that he also carried out his great work in complete dependence upon God through prayer. [As a result of reading the Hudson Taylor biography our eighth child and son (Jackson), born on December 4th, was given the middle name "Taylor".]

With the arrival of November 1999 the extensive renovation of our facilities was well behind us and we were operating a much expanded program....and the money from the Hazel Marcus estate was gone! It was time to act upon a fresh vision. It had been understood for some years that we would receive no government monies or raise funds. [Of course, this was easy to maintain due to the windfall received.] Although this approach had been practiced and maintained, it had never been formulated into an official policy of the organization. Therefore, I had written a "Financial Policy and Practice " resolution which I presented to the Directors at our monthly Board meeting of November 18, 1999.

The five sentences of this resolution generated a lot of discussion. The timing was such that we had no reserves and no reliable sources of adequate funding. We were thus poised to solicit no funds (!?). The discussion brought to light that it would be a violation of the policy for an individual director or staff member to ask for funds, to make written application, to sell a product for that purpose, to hire another to sell or solicit on our behalf, to hold a raffle to generate funds, etc. Even further, and more to the point, it was the determined purpose of this policy to restrain the directors and staff from divulging financial information to others; under no circumstances were those familiar with the financial position of the Mission free to divulge that information, be it a period of scarcity or plenty, in the course of the year.

The resolution was adopted as written. In addition, a pamphlet was penned and printed in conjunction with this resolution, entitled "Thoughts On Soliciting Funds", to make explanation to others of the purpose for such a remarkable policy. I wrote these things and argued for their implementation, setting a course for the Mission which was agreeable to the leadership. I expressed complete confidence in this approach as the direction the Lord would have us take in funding the work. [In all honesty, being human, I secretly held some trepidation in this succeeding over the long run and being able to maintain support for this policy when times became financially hard. I held no illusions but had "counted the cost" to myself, my family and those I'd convinced to honor this agenda. At the same time, I knew there was absolutely no other way to accomplish the things we desired for the Lord apart from this methodology.] We calmed our nerves and proceeded forward.

It would not be long before money became a concern and this commitment would soon be put to the test.

WRESTLING WITH GOD

In my journal I entered the following on February 24, 2000 (Thursday):

"I have thought long and hard why it is necessary for the Mission to raise no funds or even tell anyone of our current need....It is clear to me that we have placed ourselves wholly upon the mercy and goodness of God, and are trusting Him completely for the financial success of this work... We have boxed ourselves in so completely that we have no recourse other than prayer. We have also placed ourselves in a position to affect other people's lives. I desire to see people brought to a saving knowledge of Christ; I desire to see Christians influenced and brought to a deeper level of trust and faith in God; I desire to see this ministry used to bring change to people's thinking. In short, it is my personal desire to 'wrestle with God', as did Jacob, even if it means I will walk with a limp for the rest of my life! I DO NOT desire any longer to just receive my salary month by month, and produce and deliver a bunch of meals every day, and pass out a few boxes of groceries every week. If this is all I/we do, then we might as well just close down and let some government agency or social service organization take on this job. We need to minister physically and spiritually to the unrepentant unbelievers and to the immature believers in our churches. To be effective it appears the time has come to 'wrestle with God and with men' in order to receive a blessing and be a blessing."

In my journal, three days later, I entered the following on February 27 (Sunday):

"This evening I attended Bethlehem Baptist Church. We arrived a few minutes late and sing the last strands of a song before Pastor Cary Kimbrell [one of my Board members by the way] comes up to pray. One of the first things he mentions in his prayer is that we are to be like Jacob and wrestle with God until we receive a blessing! I am struck by his reference to this very section God impressed on my heart and that I spoke on as a brief devotion on Friday at the Mission. This is a message for me. God is letting me know that I must wrestle with Him in prayer to receive a blessing. I am thankful that I went to hear from the Lord after my nap."

A VALUABLE VIDEO PROJECTOR

Martin & Karen Arroyo were in Laurel on June 27, 1999. They had fed and evangelized children in the huge garbage dumps of Mexico City for seven years. They had been forced to leave by officials who did not approve of their evangelistic efforts. When the Lord supplied their financial needs, they intended to re-locate to an area much farther south into Mexico. I kept in contact with them over the next few months and asked them for what I might pray. They specifically needed three items : (1) a trailer, (2) a generator, and (3) a video projector. [Interestingly, I noted they never once asked me for money but answered my questions about their planned work as I pursued them with interest and prayers.]

On the morning of June 14th I was leaving to go visit some clients. I recorded in my journal: "...One elderly man is greatly depressed, one elderly woman is extremely bitter. But, before I can get out of the parking lot to go see the people I am delayed by [a man]. He flags me down as I pull onto the street. When he steps from his truck he pulls a check from his pocket and hands it to me. The check is from Wildwood Baptist Church in the amount of \$42,434.12! I'm amazed. [He] reports that these are the proceeds from the sale of their church and the Mission was given the largest portion. All I can say is 'Praise God'! The Lord continues to surprise us by His provision..."

At the Board of Directors' meeting of August 19th, it was voted to designate \$9000.00 to the Arroyos to help allow them to get re-established in Mexico and serve as "our agents" in setting up a feeding program for the poor. The money would be made available to them when they returned to Mexico. This decision was made after much prayer, discussion, and the reception of the large, one-time donation we received in June. Our commitment was to local missions (Jones County), but we felt the need to set aside a small portion of our resources to foreign missions. We desired the right balance as we sought the Lord's leading in this work of feeding the widows and poor and evangelizing.

Following the holidays, the Arroyos intended to return to Mexico on the first Monday in January, 2000. They had received the trailer and the generator, but not the video projector. They wanted a projector to show Christian movies, for evangelism and teaching and entertainment, to the remote villages they would be serving.

Again we saw the Lord's hand in their proposed endeavor. We had been promised a check for \$5000 from an "association" before Christmas. The check never arrived as promised. After Christmas, a local lady who had chosen to seek the money for us of her own volition, called to report the check had gotten lost! On January 7th (2000), from her hand in our parking lot, we received the check from the Video Software Dealers' Association in California! People from New Orleans, Jackson, and Mobile came as part of an entourage to receive publicity and witness the presentation of this single check! We had voted to give the Arroyos \$2000 of this \$5000 for them to buy a video projector, as we had no doubt it was the Lord's will (due to the remarkable circumstances surrounding this donation and the source of the unsolicited funds). The Arroyos were poised to purchase the projector in Tennessee when the money arrived and were soon on their way back to Mexico with it. The woman who sought this money for us served in no capacity at the Mission and knew nothing of this need.

Martin voluntarily promised to take real good care of the projector for which we had prayed and to whom we had made petition only to the Lord.

[Research brought to light that we received another check from the same foundation in Encino, CA in December 2000 for \$6000! I had completely forgotten this but found a copy of the check, dated 12-19-2000, in my files.]

TEN YEARS AFTER (November 1999 - November 2009)

Prayer Worked

We have made application of this policy of no financial solicitation and have made it a policy to not reveal our financial situation for ten years. When asked we have kindly explained that we are not at liberty to divulge information of this kind. It has been necessary to do this in different setting and we have gotten different responses. Time and again we have had the opportunity to emphasize the importance of and dependence upon prayer. Our Board of Directors have been called to prayer (not fund raising); our staff and volunteers have been called to prayer. We even had cards printed and distributed urging people to pray. We were serious; we've been adamant in this approach for ten years.

People might ask, "So, what happened?"

The answer is clearly, "The Lord has been faithful." We have continued serving the community without interruption, we have been able to meet all our monthly financial obligations without fail, and we've paid staff payrolls year in and year out. This is a testimony to our Lord and Savior's overwhelming goodness. It has always been our motivation to draw attention to Him, and not to ourselves, for any success we have had in carrying out this work. We make no emotional pleas for money or sell no product. We pray and trust Him to impress upon people to give.

Unsolicited Publicity

We have made it a practice to not even seek publicity through the media. We do not call the radio, television, or newspaper folks to ask them to take a picture or do a story on our work. Contributors from businesses, professional organizations, civic clubs, and schools have contacted media representatives to share with the community what they've donated (usually food or money) and had pictures taken with us. We have no problem with this but choose to not "solicit" recognition for ourselves in this way. The only time we contact the media is to ask them to announce our Annual Meeting in April, and request they cover this meeting as a news story; our by-laws require we make a public report once a year, and so we open our records to the community in accountability at this time.

People might ask, "Are you against receiving recognition for the work being done?"

The answer is "No, but that's not our emphasis. Recognition comes and we do not need to expend time and energy trying to make it happen." Two examples will be cited from this year alone to make the point.

On the front page of the "Laurel Leader-Call", dated January 26, 2009, was an article with an accompanying picture of volunteer Aaron Heidelberg. There was a lengthy write-up outlining his life and his involvement with the Mission. As a recently elected alderman for the city of Ellisville, the reporter interviewed him in our entrance room and a picture was taken of him holding a plate for delivery to Ellisville. He is certainly worthy of recognition and the media took notice of him.

For television station "WDAM-TV", current Board members Garland Miles and John Ripley were interviewed in our building for the evening newscast on February 27, 2009. This was a promotion for their "Stuff-A-Truck" project. The station had contacted me and wanted permission to pursue this unique community-wide food drive on our behalf. At their request I was at WDAM at 5:30 AM on March 11th to be interviewed live by Miranda Beard. This was the day of the food drive and others were interviewed for television broadcasts throughout the day. The following morning we received three pick-up loads of canned and non-perishable foods! The cameras recorded the food being unloaded from the trucks at our back door and they requested another brief interview.

We could not have come up with a better idea than this if we were seeking self-promotion as a goal. Again, we want to draw attention to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who we credit and trust with this matter of publicity. [We also badly needed the food!]

This does not mean that we do not receive attention in the media regularly. We have been highlighted often in the newspaper and on television through the efforts of others.

Surprise Money

The Lord has been gracious to provide monies for us repeatedly but there have been periods over the past ten years when we have found ourselves in dire straits. Nevertheless He has not failed us. We have seen money come from the most unusual sources and under surprising circumstances (which has been reported in past newsletters). We have been delighted many times by His generosity. This year (2009) has been no exception. We received a check for \$35,000.00 from an individual on April 3rd; it was hand delivered. We received another, completely unexpected, check from a man for \$10,000.00 in the mail on July 22nd; on the same day a woman approached me in the parking lot with a personal check for \$1000.00.

We have been given pause, not just by the amounts of single checks, but also by remarkable circumstances surrounding some of the gifts. An example of this can be drawn from April. We were blessed to receive \$5000 from an individual donor in a check by mail. The envelope arrived in our mail box on the morning of April 6th. When I went home for lunch, I glanced at the newspaper. I read the obituaries and came across a name which immediately struck me as familiar. I re-read the obituary notice, trying to place this elderly lady, then it struck me that this was

the same person whose name was on the \$5000.00 check!

The deceased was not finished blessing us. We received another donation from our departed sister-in-the-Lord on April 16th. One of our volunteers had been approached by another person who gave him a certificate of deposit for \$3487.23, which was from the same person who had recently died! This was so peculiar, it caused us to stop and think. The Lord did not want these precious donations to go unnoticed, or received flippantly, from one of His dear saints. They were not and the significance was not lost on us.

Please do not think we appreciate only large donations or those with a “novel” story surrounding them. We are thankful for the monies entrusted to us no matter the amounts. The regularity by which some individuals and churches and organizations give serves as a foundation of support for us. Further, I assure the readers that the widow’s mite does not go unnoticed to us or, more importantly, to the Lord. My purpose in sharing information about these large and unusual contributions is to highlight the generosity of our Father and encourage others to trust Him in faith and prayer.

People might ask, “Don’t you think, by letting everyone know about these large donations, that it might cause others to not give?” This allows me the opportunity to make the point again. We are not concerned with fund-raising and the purpose of this letter is not to motivate people to give. The purpose is to make a report, as our supporters are entitled to receive, and to portray our Lord in His magnanimousness as He answers prayer and provides for His people and His work.

Name Recognition

People might ask, “How do you expect to get new support if no effort is made to tell people and the ‘novelty’ (or word-of-mouth) of it wears off?” We do tell people openly about this work. There are several avenues available to anyone who is interested which will allow them to learn of our organization. There have been dozens of invitations given to speak of this work at churches and civic clubs over the years. We are available to speak. Newsletters have been mailed once or twice every year for ten years to keep people abreast of the details of this program. Nearly one-thousand letters are distributed at a time. We are highly visible and located on a busy street. We are open every day of the year, Monday through Friday (with the exception of Christmas Day) and available to receive interested inquirers. We have a web site that can be accessed at christianfoodmission.org which was originally designed and maintained by Phil Buteau a few years ago. [We ran into problems this year with the domain name, but were eventually able to resolve this issue. It cost a great deal of time and \$560 but the problem was solved.]

In addition to speaking, newsletters, and the web site, we have volunteers who enjoy what they are doing by serving others. They are our best voice. In July an accurate count was made of the volunteers, while updating my records, by having each person fill out a printed “Volunteer” index card. We had a total of 76 different people volunteer in a two-week period at the Mission. [This may sound like a lot of people, but we certainly can use more like-minded volunteers to carry out this important work.]

There are many others who know us through the physical services we provide. Home health nurses and agencies, relatives, neighbors, etc. know us well due to our extensive meal delivery service to the elderly and widowed. Churches and pastors know us because of the food bank we house in order to give assistance to the needy. Judges and officers of the court know us because students and others have been sentenced to community service hours under our supervision. Youth ministers, Boy Scout leaders, and college students know us because they’ve completed hours as Christian ministry or met requirements of a service project or fulfilled a class requirement under our direction.

Also, we have our public Annual Meeting where the community is notified and invited to attend. This year our meeting was held on April 23rd at the Laurel Train Depot. This year’s meeting was highly significant and largely focused on one man, which drew attention to an important change that took place. In my journal is recorded the following entry, as I recall the emotional scene: “For his 22 years of service as our Treasurer, Bart Terry is honored for his role because he is stepping down from the Board. I express my heartfelt gratitude for his tireless service all these years. He is a friend and a dear Christian brother whom I love very much. He has given counsel and suggestions about the Mission’s operation and about many personal matters as well. My life will not be the same without my weekly dialogue and visits at his home and office. ...” For his professional (accounting) services and long-standing Christian labors and testimony, he was given this year’s “Pass It On Award”. This award/plaque

had been given, in the past, to several worthy individuals and groups who had set "...an example of godly servanthood who had been most diligent in ministry to others in the name of Christ." No one was more deserving of this recognition than our dear brother, Bart Terry. [In this critical place of service we are most fortunate to now have the capable accounting acumen of David Dill on our Board of Directors.]

Christian Literature

A large part of what we have done for the past ten years involves the distribution of much Christian literature. We have distributed multiple thousands of booklets, tracts, and Scripture portions on selected topics we believe are consistent with our work. We have made these available to persons for their personal use and assisted others with quantities for them to give away as well. We have had large amounts of material printed at our cost; we've purchased selected items in quantity; we have received many, many cases of selected devotional booklets, pamphlets, or Scripture portions almost every month for our distribution. We charge nothing for this literature.

Here are some examples of what we regularly receive and, in turn, make available to others. We have a standing order of 400 copies of "Our Daily Bread" and 500 large-print copies of "Our Daily Bread" which arrive quarterly. The large-print devotions are delivered with our meals to homes and made available to others who have difficulty with sight. We distribute handsome copies of the "Gospel of John" in English and Spanish. These are regularly placed in trays, with other material, in area laundromats where people may sit and read as they wait on clothes. Three or four tracts and booklets are placed in boxes of groceries for those who receive food assistance. In our entrance room, volunteers and others have access to a range of displayed pieces of selected literature.

We have especially selected tracts and booklets which we find useful in addressing the topics of prayer, evangelism, sickness, conversion stories, and sin and repentance. We have found the "Chapel Library" in Pensacola, FL to be an excellent source of biblically solid Christian pamphlets and booklets for which we have found much use. The conversion story entitled "Greasy The Robber" (Lukesh) has been popular over the years and we have been surprised to find much use (and many requests) for "How To Be Free From Bitterness" (Wilson). Rod Hollins, a student who worked part-time with us from December 2008 until August 2009, expressed to me that the booklets "How To Be Free From Bitterness" and "Biblical Self-Esteem" (Adams) had helped him and had helped many others as he had given them out.

In 1999, I wrote a little booklet called "The Lawless And The Lord" that I could use for evangelism. In fact, my original purpose in writing the booklet was so I could give it to convicts. I was involved in a prison ministry through Audubon Drive Bible Church and had begun visiting the Rankin County prison regularly. The cover of the booklet pictures a man behind bars. One thousand copies were printed in 1999 and it was reprinted in 2000, 2005, and 2009. Interestingly, on February 3, 2009, long-time volunteer Ellen Gunn reported seeing a man passing out copies of this booklet at Wal-Mart! She had received a copy and recognized it.

In 2000, I had a booklet printed that I called "Relationships: Restored and Revealed". Among the many poor clients who approached us for assistance, we found repeatedly a lack of a healthy relationships with Christ and a desperate need for healthy relationships in marriage. The booklet was written as a response to this epidemic of despondency. This useful piece was reprinted in 2001, 2004, and 2009.

In 2004, I wrote three tracts on prayer. In 2003 my dear wife succumbed to sickness over and over again. Finally, in February of 2004 she was hospitalized, and remained so for several days while a battery of tests were run. I wrote the second tract, "Receiving Peace Through Prayer" in her hospital room. Beth was bedridden for several months afterward, which drove our family, friends, and church to much prayer. It was a fitting year to write about prayer. The Mission had been presented to the Lord in prayer; now the Lord was calling me and my family to another level of commitment and dependence upon Him in prayer until her health improved.

In 2005, I wrote three booklets on related topics and had them printed. The first one was called "Sickness Profitable & Purposeful". Several things motivated me write this particular little booklet. Near the end of 2001 my beloved grandmother died. One of my relatives, who had known of her lengthy suffering before the godly woman died, asked the question, "How could God let her suffer like that?" That question I'd overheard stuck in my mind. I secretly prayed I'd get an opportunity to speak at the funeral in the little country church some distance away in Picayune; I desired time to speak of my grandmother and to speak to the topic of her suffering in answer to that question. In response to my secret prayer only, the pastor of the church, whom I did not know, called and asked me

to give the eulogy!

Second, I'd been blessed by the good teaching of a booklet from the "Chapel Library" titled simply "Sickness" by J. C. Ryle, which spoke of how God uses sickness. Thirdly, while on a vacation to Gulf Shores in 2003 we took our ill daughter to the emergency room in Foley, AL. While there we were exposed to bad teaching about sickness. A young man was talking loudly to another so everyone could hear him say, "You can rebuke that sickness! It's from the devil! You can cast it out! You can cast the devil out!" Fourth, I had studied the topic of sickness and suffering in some detail from Scripture and understood the importance of having a theology of it. After all, we were ministering to the sick and dying every day at the Mission and calling others to do so as well. It was clear to me that most Christians seemed to be sorely lacking in a crucial biblical understanding of how to minister to the sick among us.

In 2007, I wrote a tract entitled "The 'Good Luck' God". This was an evangelistic pamphlet to explain the person of Christ and call unbelievers to accept Him as their only Lord and Savior. This was written as a result of a series of conversations, over several days, with a Hindu hotel manager in Ocean Springs, MS. My wife and I spent several quiet days in the area together and enjoyed the time.

In the years between 1999 and 2009 I've penned and had printed six tracts and nine booklets for my personal and the Mission's distribution. We pray regularly that the Lord will use the Christian materials to be a blessing to our brothers and sisters in Christ and that it will fall into the hands of unbelievers who the Lord will be pleased to bring to salvation by its use.

Much Sadness

In an attempt to express an honest portrayal of the Mission, it must be understood that most days are not extraordinary experiences or contain unique circumstances which set them apart. Most days are fairly routine. Food is picked up or delivered to us, stored, and processed. This food is then given away as prepared meals or boxes of groceries. We answer the phone, run various errands, meet with clients, keep records, interact with volunteers, etc.

Also, as I have read back through my journals for ten years, there are many persons who have passed away who were dear to the Mission and to me personally. For example, on the morning of February 23 of this year, we received the shocking news that Murray Wallace had had a heart attack on his back porch and died suddenly! Mr. Wallace was a faithful Friday volunteer for some time and became a fixture at the Mission. There have been others like him who have passed away and are missed.

There have also been elderly clients who had become dear to us who have passed away and were a joy to serve and visit. We have interviewed clients many times who have broken down in tears before us. We see people suffering physically and emotionally. We've seen the effects of alcohol abuse, divorce, ungodly lifestyles, illegal behavior, and refusal to submit to authority (by youth). It is tragic and sad. Among the elderly, we've seen loneliness, depression, bitterness, fear, and feelings of uselessness. All of this is in the context of physical suffering.

From one perspective, this can be looked at as "problems" we are facing all around us. From another perspective, we can look at these as "opportunities" to be of help to others. As Christians, these are opportunities to live out our Christian faith in word and deed. Remember the Mennonites who came in 1987?



Robert Smith

CHRISTIAN FOOD MISSION, INC.

Statement of Faith

1. The Bible, containing the Old and New Testaments, was written by the inspiration of God and is His infallible Word. Scripture alone is the ultimate authority for faith and practice. (Proverbs 22:19-21; Luke 1:3-4; Romans 15:4; Matthew 4:4,7,10; Isaiah 8:19-20; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Hebrews 1:1-2; Luke 16:29, 31; Revelation 22:18-19; Luke 24:27, 44; 2 Peter 1:21; Matthew 5:18)
2. There is only one God who has existed form all of eternity in three persons - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, equal in power and glory. God is limited by nothing other than His own nature and character. (Deuteronomy 5:4; I Corinthians 8:4, 6; Psalm 90:2; I Timothy 1:17; I John 5:7; Matthew 3:16-17; Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14; John 1:14, 18; John 15:26; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 1:11; Job 11:7-9; Job 26:13; James 1:13,17; Malachi 3:6; I Kings 8:27; Jeremiah 23:23-24; Romans 11:33-34; Psalm 145:17; I John 1:5)
3. Jesus Christ, born of a virgin, was God in human flesh, both fully God and fully man. Jesus lived a sinless life, performed miracles, suffered death on a cross, was bodily resurrected, and ascended to the right hand of the Father. (Luke 1:27, 31, 35; Colossians 2:9; Romans 9:5; I Peter 3:18; I Timothy 3:16; Romans 1:3-4; Hebrews 7:26; John 1:14; Acts 10:38; John 2:11, 22-23; John 11:43-45; John 20:30-31; Acts 8:6; Matthew 4:23-24; Matthew 27: 35, 50; Mark 15:25, 37; I Corinthians 15:3-5; Matthew 28:5-6; Mark 16:6, 19; Romans 5:6)
4. Man is by nature and choice sinful and unable to restore himself to favor with God. All stand condemned before God and are in need of salvation - forgiveness for sin. (Romans 5:12; Romans 15:16-19; I Corinthians 15:21-22; Ephesians 2:1; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 3:10-18; Psalm 51:5; Ephesians 2:3; Romans 6:23; Galatians 3:10; Lamentations 3:29; Matthew 25:41; 2 Thessalonians 1:9)
5. Salvation is through God's grace and accomplished only in Christ's work of substitutionary atonement by His death on the cross. Justification before a holy God is attained by faith alone, following the convicting work of the Holy Spirit, and is not the result of individual merit or personal works. (Romans 5:19; Hebrews 9:14, 16; Ephesians 5:2; Romans 3:25-26; John 15:13, 15; John 3:16; John 1:12; Romans 3:28; Romans 5:1; Acts 10:44; Galatians 2:16; Philippians 3:9; Acts 13:38-39; Ephesians 2:7-8; Titus 3:4-7; I John 2:1; Ezekiel 36:26-27; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Corinthians 3:3, 6; Romans 8:23; Isaiah 64:6)
6. Good works are the fruit of saving faith and an evidence of true justification before God. Faith in Christ is a living faith which enable us, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to live a godly life, evangelize the lost, and perform good deeds for our Lord. (Philippians 2:12-13; Romans 6:18, 22; James 1:14-22; 2 Peter 1:5-10; Galatians 5:22-23; Hebrews 13:20-21; Hebrews 6:10; Matthew 25:41-45; Matthew 23:3; Matthew 5:48; James 1:27; Romans 6:6-7; Galatians 5:24; Romans 8:13; 2 Corinthians 7:1; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Matthew 28:18-20; Colossians 1:21-22; Luke 24:46-49; Matthew 10:18-20)

By my signature below, I acknowledge my agreement with the above six statements.

NAME

DATE

[This resolution was adopted by the Board of Directors at the regular monthly meeting of September 21, 1995. It is required of a new Board member to read and sign this statement. It is required of a new church wishing to participate in the Pantry to have a representative of the congregation to sign the statement (and be approved by the Board). It is required of a perspective volunteer, wishing to become involved on a regular basis, to read and sign the statement (and be interviewed by at least one of the Coordinators).]

