

RUNNING WITH THE HORSEMEN



NEWSLETTER

October, 2014

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. Support of select local or foreign missions.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

The following people are presently voluntarily serving on our Board:

Dr. Cary Kimbrell (President)

Mr. Steven Morgan (V. President)

Mr. David Dill (Treasurer)

Mrs. Gail Hilbun (Secretary)

Mr. Al Moore

Mr. John Ripley

Mr. Greg Baldwin

Mrs. Carolyn Holifield

Mr. Steve Thrash

Mr. Robert Smith (ex-officio)

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,

This year (2014) has been one of adventure (and some misadventures). It has been a year of the offbeat and odd, the unexpected and surprising, the motivational and encouraging, and the troublesome and challenging. In other words, real life happens week in and week out. Our work involves, both the efforts of and services to, hundreds of people every year. Dozens and dozens of one-on-one interviews and conversations reveal human stories. In this brief report all the stories cannot be recounted, even the ones I've recorded in my journal. An overview, with a few intriguing stories to personalize reality, some unique circumstances surrounding how our needs are met, and thoughtful reasoning behind the approach we take to ministry, will be set forth for the reader.

NINE GRAPES

New Year's Day, as a family, we ate at "The Round Table" in Columbia, MS. As we took bowls of food from the lazy susan as it was turned, we chatted happily. My dear wife, Beth, mentioned that in Mediterranean countries the tradition is to eat twelve grapes at midnight, one for each month of the new year. My oldest daughter, Autumn, shared that when she was in Venezuela that's what they did there. At this writing, we are on our ninth grape of the year!

Speaking of grapes – the day after Labor Day when I interviewed Mrs. C, an 87-year-old widow who lives alone in her north Laurel apartment, as she lay stretched out on her couch, the older lady explained how she enjoys breakfast every day but is too tired to "set out" lunch. She expounded further, "I'm so tired of raisins and juice all the time."

On Labor Day there was a message on the answering machine from the daughter of an old fellow in the Shady Grove community, who lived in a well-worn trailer. He was placed in a nursing home after months of home-delivered meals. The kind message included, "...We appreciate so much everything the Christian Food Mission stands for and what its done for him..." [I remembered the initial visit to interview Mr. D because I happened to run into volunteer Lynn Taylor while looking for the house. We sat in our trucks talking in a gravel lot across the street from the man's home.]

A TYPICAL REFERRALS

Many who request meals for themselves, or who are referred by others for our lunches, are not accepted for this service. They do not qualify, or are not a part of the needy group we target for ministry. Our resources and abilities to meet the diversity of maladies in society are definitely limited. We are effective, although stretched, by the needs we've set out to address.

The young man with long hair and a long beard was dirty and thin standing in his sparsely furnished, cluttered little apartment. He cleared the only chair in the room on which there was for me to sit. He identified himself as being schizophrenic, with bouts of anxiety and depression. As part of the interview I asked, "Are you able to cook?" He shot back, offended, "Well, yea I can cook!" My next question was fair, "Then why do you need our meals?" His blunt answer was, "I ain't got no food!" I continued with this line of thought by asking, "What have you been doing for your meals?" He calmed down and explained there was a party at the apartment office yesterday so he went over there and got something to eat. Soon his face became animated again as he rambled on - "I can cook anything." Pointing across the room and into his tiny kitchen he demanded, "See that microwave over there; I can cook anything in that microwave. Anything!" I stared at the little microwave sitting atop the counter. Soon it was time for me to politely excuse myself. Relief.

The office telephone becomes an instrument of frustration. I called the number I'd been given and, getting no answer, left a message for Mrs. J identifying myself and the reason for my call. A little later someone called to ask if I'd phoned there. I told the female caller I was trying to reach Mrs. J. She told me I had the wrong number; there was no one there by that name. The following day I tried the number again, thinking I might have mis-dialed the day before. A woman answered and told me I had the wrong number. I showed the information to Bro. Greg because he had written it down. Before he could call, the phone rang and I got tied

up in a little conversation. Using our second line he was soon speaking to Mrs. J! He told her I'd call her right back when I got off the other line. When I did call her back I got the exact same "wrong number explanation." I couldn't believe it! Bro. Greg tried again. It rang and rang; he was about to hang up when Mrs. J answered. Bro. Greg was talking to her, so I, puzzled, asked for the phone. I asked the older lady, not the same voice, why someone kept telling me I had the wrong number and she did not live there. The lady off-handedly said, "Oh, that was my daughter." I pressed, "Why did she keep telling me that story?" Her unsatisfactory answer was, "I don't know. I was in the bathroom." I hung up the phone. Confusion.

The woman lay in a hospital bed inside a run-down house alone, writhing in pain beneath the covers. She struggled to smoke a cigarette in the darkened room. As I stood nearby she explained that she has a tumor on her spine and listed a host of medical problems. The middle-aged woman had a bowl of cereal for breakfast and nothing else all day, she told me (it was now about 2:30 PM). Her son, who she said lives with her "sometimes", was out with friends. He brings her food sometimes and her duplex neighbors give her meals from time to time. Mrs. G is ten years younger than myself and cries out in pain frequently during my visit. I just sense there's more to this story so I question her more closely. Finally she reveals she's been sick for some ten years and now has AIDS. She was with a man for six years, she offers, from whom she contracted the disease. She continues, without prompting, a testimony of repentance from a wicked lifestyle for which she's been forgiven, but suffers still the consequences of her past sin. I pray fervently for her. When I walk back to the street, I am wiping tears from my eyes. Overwhelmed.

The old man was legally blind and met me, as was pre-arranged, at the locked gate at the end of his drive-

A STUDY IN FOOD

Speaking of milk...In April we were contacted by a local milk distributor and offered several cases of tubs of commercial sized cottage cheese and sour cream. This opened up a relationship with Stuart Doggett and "LuVel/Prairie Farms" that has provided us with an ample supply of about-to-expire milk and other dairy products ever since.

In fact, in January, February, March, and April, we received quantities of food, especially canned goods, from a multitude of unexpected sources. [This was in addition to our established business donors, whose contacts supplied us with many cases of eggs, pallets of chicken, and frequent hauls of potatoes and bananas.] Groups decided to have food drives for us – churches, schools, clubs, businesses, even an ambulance service unloaded canned goods on a stretcher and rolled them inside!

Besides food items we've also received other donations. One unusual surprise gift came one morning in July from Oakland Grove Baptist Church. We received a load of paper towels, toilet tissue, personal hygiene items (many cases of shampoo, body wash, hand soap, bubble bath, toothpaste, etc.), bottled water, diapers and a little food. Board member and volunteer Carolyn Holifield, who had come to deliver meals on this Monday, looked on with interest as it was being unloaded in several trips. It took me a long time to inventory and sort the big pile!

In 2013 our circumstances were much different. It was a comparatively "lean year" for suitable, useable foods. We are able to feed people daily, in the numbers that we do, by employing a combination of donated and purchased foodstuffs. We go through a lot of food. Anyway, last year we struggled, which compelled me to emphasize over and over, the importance of wise *stewardship* of resources and time. This became a common theme for us as a staff, and I noticed, a theme for several of our morning devotions (especially on March 21st from Matthew 25:14-21). This, I believe, was used of God to motivate us to evaluation and prayer about our needs. As a consequence of such introspection things noticeably turned around in 2014.

As an aside, on June 21st I was watching a most interesting piece on the History Channel. A panel of food

historians, food critics, chefs, and other culinary experts had been assembled to compile the top “101 Fast Foods That Changed The World.” I wrote down the top 20 as they went through the list with an explanation for and background on each food:

instant noodles (20)	olives (16)	bagels (12)	jerky (8)	pickles (4)
dumplings (19)	corn-on-the-cob (15)	cold cuts (11)	pizza (7)	bananas (3)
burritos (18)	falafel (14)	french fries (10)	honey (6)	hot dogs (2)
canned tuna (17)	yogurt (13)	bar-b-que (9)	fried chicken (5)	hamburgers (1)

NINE CHINESE STUDENTS

April 5th was a busy Saturday. My youngest son, Jackson, and I attended the “Penland Nursery” Open House (where he won two plants as door prizes), the “Hellfighters' Motorcycle” Open House (akin to a Christian biker rally - “Burn Rubber Don't Burn In Hell”), and we set up a table at Leadership Jones County's “Jones County Day” downtown to promote the Mission (volunteer Tim Dudley was present). It was also on that morning that we came upon a rummage sale in a parking lot on Audubon Drive. The proceeds from this sale were to be used to help fund a summer mission trip to China. The sponsor of the weekend fund-raiser was First Baptist Church of Sharon.

Fast forward to August. Nine Chinese university students, enrolled in Chinese universities, arrived to contribute their labors for the morning. Jessica McKinnon and Karen Walters were the facilitators for the students. They arrived in the First Baptist Church, Sharon bus. The students and their sponsors are involved in “Bring Me Hope” - an outreach to orphans and disabled children in China. The students serve as translators at the camps in China. The students were visiting in Mississippi for fourteen days, and as part of a tightly planned itinerary, they devoted a morning to the Mission – working in the kitchen, serving meals, and delivering lunches. This was an opportunity to expose them to our world, and share our purpose and faith in the process. It was a rare moment for our work.

A front-page article in the “Impact” newspaper (dated September 3rd) reported on this group's visit and experiences. In the article it was stated of the students: “McKinnon said at the Christian Food Mission, they couldn't understand why someone would do for others in that way. So, they were able to explain to them that the action of the people at the Mission was an expression of the love of a Christian.”

NINE WIDOWS

Mrs. B has cancer and is having tests run to evaluate its extent. When I asked if she's a widow, she began to cry, reached for a kleenex near her loveseat, and told me her husband died in January.

Mrs. M has the beginnings of Alzheimer's disease and is pleasant to meet and talk with. That morning she went to town and bought lots of little plastic containers in which she planned to freeze home-made soup she was preparing to cook. She'd been strictly warned not to drive or cook!

Mrs. J's daughter was concerned about her mother who lives in the Indian Springs community. The daughter is caring for her brother who was injured in a car accident recently. Often the elderly woman forgets to eat or eats only a mayonnaise sandwich.

Mrs. M lives alone with her wild dog; her daughter is in jail. The older widow has no phone and no car. She depends on the kindness of friends for support. She was referred by a young woman who knew of her plight.

Mrs. R is on oxygen and extremely thin sitting in her bed in Ellisville. The old lady is weak, has a black eye from a recent fall, and has heart trouble. Being very independent (“ornery” I was told) she refused to stay in the nursing home.

Mrs. M stays in one bedroom of her large house because it is the only room with an air conditioner. She struggles financially and with health problems since her husband died some time ago. “He did not believe in life insurance,” she told me with regret in her voice.

In my journal I wrote this fairly common entry:

“This afternoon I visit three widows for interviews and prayers. The first has received our meals for one year and sits on her porch in the summer heat in a wheelchair. The other two are new referrals who are good candidates – bad health, living alone. All three live in Laurel. I hear their stories and learn of their trials and sadness.”

MORE THOUGHTS ON SOLICITATION

What we are doing is a popular idea and pursuit by society, feeding the needy. Secularists, community organizers, and Christians all embrace some concept of compassion and doing good deeds. There are popular notions of “giving back to the community” and “random acts of kindness.” I believe in serving the community and helping our neighbors. We feed the elderly – sick, dying, and suffering, in their homes, and provide groceries to the unemployed and underemployed. This could easily become an attractive secular community project. One way that I believe it can be maintained as a distinctively Christian outreach - witnessing, praying, distributing Christian literature, strengthening fellow believers, is by not soliciting support from the community-at-large.

If secular groups (garden clubs, schools, etc.) want to hold a food drive or a fund-raiser, or a Christian group (church, girls' club, etc.) wants to sponsor a food drive or fund-raiser, and involve the community as a benefit to the Mission, this may be permitted. Projects taken on by others, not planned or organized by Board members and staff, do not invite the opportunity for our distinctiveness as a local missions project of Christians to be compromised or the freedom of our Board to govern as they see fit to be jeopardized.

It is a challenge at times to sustain this position, and even explain this position, and it can be awkward, but this is the approach taken consistently by me and this is the established policy of our organization.

Since our nine-member Board of Directors (there's that nine again) are not asked to be fund-raising or event planning or calling on potential donors, one of their primary duties is to be knowledgeable of the internal

GUIDELINES FOR YOUR GIVING

The question is sometimes asked, “How are y'all doing financially?” or “Do you need any money?” In other words, how do we expect to get money if we don't tell people of our needs. I believe George Muller had the best position on this. He felt, instead of people asking him about the financial state of his orphanages to determine if they should give him money, potential donors should pray and seek for themselves, irregardless of Muller's circumstances, what God would have them do at the time. Here are guidelines I have established that I have found to be sound:

When Not To Give Money:

- (1) If the reason is to purposefully not support the local church, as an act of *punishment* toward the officers or leaders.
- (2) If the response is to a stirring appeal, as a purely heightened *emotional* reaction.
- (3) If the giving is motivated by an uncomfortable feeling of excessive prosperity in contrast to others as a way of relieving perceived *guilt*.
- (4) If the goal of generosity is based on teaching that the giver will receive even more material blessings, as being in actuality *selfishness*.
- (5) If the money contributed is thought of as a “good work” alone, as an effort to merit God's favor or *acceptance*.
- (6) If the gift is given with an eye for personal recognition or human approval, as a means of building one's *reputation*.
- (7) If money is given grudgingly or dutifully out of habit, as an *obligation* without joy.

When To Give Money:

Under God's leadership and prompting
Without violation of Scripture or conscience
In obedience to His will and your calling
Amid prayer in seeking His guidance
Joyfully, unselfishly for His glory
While practicing wise stewardship
By practicing systematic giving

RUNNING WITH THE HORSEMEN

2013 brought us many “lean months” financially. All obligations were met, as they always have been without fail, although staff salaries were “delayed” several times. This was held as a private matter and managed internally by the officers of the Board of Directors. The circumstances were regularly discussed, pause was given for evaluation, and we were called to prayer.

This year began and proceeded routinely (in the area of monetary contributions). We did have a single \$5000 contribution from an out-of-state couple and I recall a woman popping in to hand me an envelope before hastily leaving – it contained a \$1000 money order. All those in authority eyed our finances closely as the months unfolded. We were, as I like to say, “On the edge of our seats.” Then suddenly it happened. On June 7th, a Saturday, I picked up two envelopes from our post office box. In one of the envelopes I had to look at the check two or three times to make certain I was seeing the right amount. It was astounding. A man, familiar with our work for years, had mailed an undesignated check to the Mission in the amount of \$207,470.48! [Because of this contribution, after much discussion and prayer, the Board voted in September to allocate \$150,000 to the “Building Fund.”]

Monday morning I took the check to our treasurer's, David Dill's, office so it could be deposited. Soon afterward I sent a private e-mail to the nine Board members reporting this significant blessing from God. We give Him all the praise for this donation coming from one He impressed to give. David had contact with the donor and informed us he desires to remain anonymous.

We had determined on February 6th, in agreement with volunteer Willia Harris during the morning devotion, to be people who “run with the horsemen” (as based on Jeremiah 12:5). Exactly four months later, a check was written (dated) on June 6th for this sizeable amount. Our Father has given a good gift to His children again and has given me “the thrill” again.

COMING TO A CLOSE

It's hard to find an ending because the experiences I've recorded in my journal, thus far this year, are not close to being exhausted.

Besides our regular volunteers, Bro. Greg scheduled “Jones County Junior College's Honors Institute” student workers for the spring semester, and several church youth groups during the summer.

Freezing temperatures in January and February left some of our clients with burst plumbing. One older man with cancer was the object of much concern by volunteer and Board member John Ripley, when he had no water.

The spring and summer brought many local festivals. Personally I enjoyed the “Strawberries And Cream Festival” at the Crosby Arboretum in Picayune, and loved the t-shirts at the “Crawfish Festival” held at Little Black Creek Waterpark and the “Crystal Springs Tomato Festival.” At the “Blueberry Jubilee” in Poplarville we loved “Aunt Polly's Famous Blueberry Lemonade” and found former volunteer Ramona Bridges selling her books.

Our 29th Annual Meeting was held on April 12th. I don't know how many recall the meeting at the “Laurel Train Depot,” but Rod Hollins and his culinary arts students out did themselves on the refreshments. After all, we are the Christian “Food” Mission.

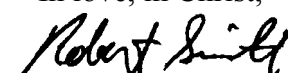
A tornado touched down on April 30th leaving much damage south and east of Sandersville. Many of my neighbors were hit hard; my only loss was the clothesline in our back yard. Volunteers Mr. & Mrs. Jerry Fall delivered meals, although their property and home were severely damaged by this storm.

My son worked with me all summer. He observed, “There's a lot of misery in the world.” It was in August that he and I found Mrs. H lying on the floor beside her kitchen table, having fallen there unable to get up due to extreme weakness. Volunteer Mary Holifield has observed, and noted, the importance of “visitation” as her group has been serving the Lebanon community.

Bro. Greg was interviewed for a lengthy newspaper article. In February volunteer Barbara Balliett brought a clipping of the article and it was posted on the bulletin board in our entrance room.

And so it goes on and on.

In love, in Christ,



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 from 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).]