

Heart to Heart

A quarterly newsletter of Open Hearts Ministry

Winter 2003

Our Mission:

*"Ministering
to the
abused
through the
love of Christ
and
equipping
others to do
the same."*

How Do We Do It? *by Mark Bonham, Executive Director*

In this newsletter we address two issues that come up with increasing frequency. Sandy writes about the problem of "church abuse". I am concerned that churches grow to be safe places for healing from abuse and not places that continue to wound. It is no surprise to me that such issues are in the church: wounded people wound people. It is more of a concern when we don't recognize or fail to address the issue. Mary Jane writes about being a safe place for the restoration of abusers. We have our head in the sand if we think that the victim story is all there is: wounded people wound people. In a variety of ways, we have all abused others, and we need to be able to hear and respond to these stories.

At the office a busy year is drawing to a close with an even busier year ahead of us. When people ask me how an administratively small organization like ours does all it does, I must respond that we would not have such impact if it were not for our wholehearted volunteers. We are doing what every church hopes to do - mobilizing lay people. How do we do this?

First, we are relevant. We address deeply felt heart issues. While many may well see us as serving victims of sexual abuse, I have come to realize that this ministry is so much broader. We are about recovery from broken relationships and the restoration of our identity in Christ

through biblical community. Nothing more traumatically breaks relationships and destroys identity than abuse, abandonment, and betrayal. At some level, this has been our common human experience since the fall of man. No one has escaped. Therefore our mission touches every person. We have chosen to focus on those who are becoming aware of their need for recovery and restoration.

Second, we believe that every person is a part of this ministry. There are many aspects to providing a "safe place for recovery on the journey to a restored relationship with God, self and others". There are those who have experienced some degree of recovery themselves and can facilitate this for others by leading a small group. There are those with organizational and hospitality gifts who help bring groups together. There are those who pray for the ministry. There are those who do a myriad of tasks to help it run smoothly. At SALTS (Survivors of Abuse Leadership training Seminar) we have people who run transportation, registration, bookstore, audio-visual, set up chairs and scoop ice cream. Locally it is much the same. Some teach and some lead worship. The work of some is never seen. But all are partners in the process. It doesn't take a college degree to do this. But it takes a very deep commitment to use all you have. We are blessed to have people who God has touched and who, as a result, want to serve others.

Third, we participate in a simple process that keeps multiplying. We lead people through a recovery process at SALTS that they take back to their local church, crisis pregnancy center, local prison, counseling office, neighborhood or any other open and willing place that their God inspired creative hearts may lead them. Out of these groups come people who find their hearts, their voices and a new relationship with the Wounded Healer, Jesus Christ. It isn't long before they, too, want to be a part of the process. Some of these come to SALTS for training as new leaders. From a few local groups in Kalamazoo ten years ago, there are today trained group leaders in over 30 states and 8 foreign countries. In 1993, at our first SALTS, 37 leaders were trained. This year 235 were trained and in 2003 we anticipate training 400 new leaders. This requires an army of volunteers. I never cease to be amazed by the commitment of Open Heart's partners.

I love to celebrate God's commitment to us in sending His Son, who became flesh and "pitched his tent among our tents" so that we could behold the Father's glory in His only begotten Son. What we see in that glory is Jesus, full of grace and truth. Grace paves the way for truth. May 2003 find you growing in both!

What is Church Abuse?

by Sandy Burdick, Ministry Director

Near the end of the October SALTS, I asked the 42 leaders to tell me how many people in their groups were talking about pain that had come through the church. The answer was: over half. 70 people out of 125 people and that does not count the leaders themselves. This should not be happening.

Also several leaders wrote me after the seminar to say that their church leaders wanted to know what we meant by church abuse. In response to that question, I would like to list some of what church abuse includes:

1. At the top would be sexual abuse by church leadership and church workers and members. This includes all the categories of rape, adultery, molestation, and emotional affairs.
2. Failure to respond to those who report such incidents in ways that promote healing. The “forgive and forget” model is re-abusive.
3. Failure to report abusers to church leadership and to the proper authorities.
4. Failing to protect women (and children) who are in an abusive marriages. That includes physical, sexual, and emotional abuse. Telling a woman to submit to this type of authority is re-abusive
5. Being critical and judgmental of those who are engaged in ministries to the wounded. Accusations of “heresy” because of supposed “psycho-babble”. Failure to rebuke and discipline such people as “railers.”
6. Keeping people “in-line” through legalistic rules.
7. Shaming and betraying people from the pulpit through breach of confidentiality or using them as an example.
8. Hate letters sent to the pastor by people who don’t want him do anything that looks different: the way he dresses, the Bible he uses, the music he likes, the way his kids behave, the way his wife dresses and the way he spends his money.
9. Failure to address conflict in a Biblical way: Matthew 18 principles.
10. Failure to have a plan to restore those who are under discipline.
11. Shunning people rather than embracing them and calling them to experience the grace of forgiveness, repentance and the healing of body ministry.
12. Failing to reinstate people after you test and prove their repentance.

13. Failure to protect children from workers who abuse. Policies need to be in place for all church workers.

14. Not pursuing people who are hurt and leave the church.

15. Not allowing people time to heal and grieve over death, divorce and abuse: Expecting people to “just claim the victory” is an abusive attitude.

16. Pursuing a “keep silent” rule about existing abuse. Not allowing outside help for a church that needs guidance through abusive events.

17. Failure to protect those who are in leadership. Leaders need connection with safe and good people in the church who can hear their hearts and not feel condemned.

18. Failure to recognize from the pulpit that abuse exists. The story of Tamar warns about the danger of silence.

19. Condemning all counseling from the pulpit.

20. Teaching that a Biblical counselor is simply one who quotes verses from the Bible and prays. Leadership needs to investigate the church and community to find people who are equipped to walk with the wounded:

I have run out of space. You may have much to add to this.

At the seminar I talk about what a healthy church is. After 31 years of church life, I found a healthy church. The article about a healthy church was in this newsletter several months ago.

I think it is time we break the silence about abuse in the church and endeavor to grow compassionate, healthy, life-giving environments where the gospel can be heard, believed and lived out.



In Memory Of Fred Phillips...

Many of you who have contacted our office know Ann Browning, OHM's Administrative Assistant. Ann's father, Fred Phillips, passed away on November 30, at the age of 68. Please pray for Ann, her mother and her family as they grieve the loss of Fred. Ann was very close to her father.

OHM Update and Year End Project

2002 has been another year of growth for OHM with 18% more leaders trained than in 2001. What is more, we have positioned ourselves to train over 40% more leaders in 2003 with seminars in Alaska in January and Hungary in August. This is the first year we offered a fall seminar in Michigan in addition to the spring seminar. We set an attendance record with 125 participants and 42 leaders, plus teachers and support staff. There was a waiting list of people who wanted to attend but we had pressed the very limits of our capacity. Already our April/May seminar is 70% full. It is clear that our primary challenge is not recruiting to SALTS, but having the capacity to train all that want to come.

In keeping with our vision of seeing men and women from among the diverse people groups around the world equipped to walk with those wounded through abuse, we have worked with LAMP – U.S., a mission agency working with Native Americans in developing an “English as a Second Language” version of our manual. We are also making progress on the Spanish language edition of the manual. This tool will be available the second half of 2003.

We are partnering with leaders in Austria to host SALTS Europe. Even though we have not yet promoted this seminar, we have had many inquiries from people all over Europe. We need to underwrite the cost of leader travel for this seminar. We have set a goal of raising \$15,000 so that people whose average monthly wage is under \$450 a month will still have an opportunity to introduce the Wounded Healer to wounded people in their countries.

To do this we need your help. Please take a few moments to make your special end of the year contribution using the postage free reply envelope we have provided and indicate that you desire to help by indicating “**SALTS Europe**” on the memo line of your check, while making your check payable to Open Hearts Ministry. Please consider as well what part you can play in helping OHM in 2003. Our office is in continual need of regular donations to help us meet the increasing demands for the ministry we offer. Undesignated gifts will help OHM meet its budget.

We make it easy for you to give by electronic fund transfer or credit card. Fill out the agreement on the reply envelope or send us your card information. All gifts are acknowledged with a tax receipt. Thank you for including Open Hearts in your giving plans!

What to do if...

...a group member tells his/her story of having been an abuser

by Mary Jane Hamilton, SALTS trainer and OHM mentor.

When this ministry first started we focused primarily on the victim's story. But since then we have learned that many victims have also been abusers and need a safe place to tell that story. So, what do you do as a leader when you learn that a participant in your group wants to tell the abuser side of his/her story? Following are tips that may help you and your group members make the transition of hearing an abuser's story:

- Hear it as a first time confession of sin.
- Take their story seriously.
- Grieve over their sin.
- Exercise the priesthood of Christ and say, “You are forgiven, in Jesus name.”.
- Embrace them with words and arms.
- Ask, “Has the person you have harmed heard your confession?”
- Ask, “Have you acknowledged to others how you have harmed them?”
- Ask, “Is there change in your life?”
- Offer the grace of continued relationship.
- Don't bring it up again if they don't.*

(*Please be aware of the responsibility for reporting current abuse as required in your state or country and let your group know your of obligations to comply.)

The cities of refuge in Joshua 20 provided a safe place for a manslayer to state his case before the elders and dwell within the city while his guilt was being examined. It is my hope that an abuser will be provided a safe place within your group to tell his/her story. Remember: We, as leaders, are instrumental to our group as we model grace toward an abuser. Remember, too: Grace seasoned with love models the heart of Christ. Draw upon this heart and Christ within you to provide that safe place for all stories to be heard.



Kalamazoo, MI 49007

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
KALAMAZOO, MI
PERMIT NO. 307

*Merry Christmas
from your friends at
Open Hearts!*



"Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come and has redeemed his people. He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David...to show mercy to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant." Luke 1:68-72

Like Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, we rejoice in this season that calls us to remember that God, in his great mercy, has moved toward us to redeem our stories. As we celebrate the birth of the child of promise and covenant, our prayer is that every person touched through this ministry will be able to prepare the way for others to know Christ as their salvation and healing.

"...because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace." Luke 1:78,79

Important Dates to Remember

Don't forget your end of the year gift to OHM! Gifts must be postmarked by December 31 for a tax deduction in 2002.

January 10-18, 2003 – SALTS Alaska in Soldotna. Pray for us as we equip small group leaders among the Alaskan Natives.

Dr. Dan Allender returns to Kalamazoo!

March 8, 2003 – "Learning to Love Your Story" Part II continues the theme launched last year while adding valuable insights into the value of embracing your story. See the enclosed brochure for details.

April 28-May 3, 2003 – SALTS Maranatha, Muskegon, MI. This seminar is filling fast. Send your registration soon to avoid the waiting list.

August 18-23, 2003 – SALTS Europe, Dobogoko, Hungary. This seminar is for those living in Europe. See the update in this newsletter to help us with this special event.

October 13-18, 2003 – SALTS Maranatha, Muskegon, MI. Last year this event filled by June 1. We are taking registrations now.

Extra brochures and details are available. Contact us!