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Annual Ministry Report
October 2015

As I look back on the past year, I thank God for the people that He has brought here to ZCC! Seeing the wonderful faithfulness of our prison and senior home teams, the graceful spirit of our Alpha teams, the many volunteers who faithfully demonstrate God's love at our pantry and closet, the incredibly hard work of our gardeners, so many coming for evangelism training, and the wonderful work of our partner ministries like the health center and Love True... this is a time and place to acknowledge the presence and the fragrance of Jesus Christ in the people involved in mission and outreach at ZCC. Glory to God for His life expressed through His people! You can find more info on our website, but here are highlights:

Live as Jesus Lived...

Alpha

Alpha is led by Josh and Linda Tiner, and serves as an 'on-ramp' to the Christian life - a place where those interested in exploring the teachings of the Bible and the claims of Jesus Christ can do so in an open, family-type atmosphere. This year we had about 90 people attending Alpha, and now even have some people who came in from the recent Somerville outreach!

Prison Ministry

Did you know that 70% of released inmates end up back in prison? That number changes dramatically when two things happen: a person accepts Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, and is brought into a coaching relationship with a person or team ready to walk with them into a new life!

This year, our prison ministry has been active in both men's and women's county jails, and we have begun to work more closely with Prison Fellowship for training and resources. There is even one inmate touched by the work who tithed to ZCC from jail! What a difference Jesus makes! Please pray for Linda Tiner (women) and Mike Farnham (men) as they continue to serve with their teams.

Senior Home: Spring Hill

David Tarantino continues to lead a faithful team once a month after church to the Spring Hill facility where they share the Word, songs and fellowship with elderly people who stay within the Spring Hill facility. This is a beautiful example of the way God touches hearts to reach out to those who are often marginalized by society, reminding them and us that He sees each one.

Evangelism

We have a goal that by the end of 2016, at least half of our congregation will have gone through evangelism training of some kind. We are well on our way! Last year, 80 people participated in the training, and this year, over 220 have gone through evangelism training! The vision is not just to enable people to serve on ZCC's outreaches, but also to equip each of us to share Jesus with those around us! Pray for Christine Carpenter as she leads our monthly evangelism prayer group!

Serve as Jesus Served...

Pantry

Our pantry serves over 300 families per month, working with multiple external partners and around 60 volunteers. We are now completely computerized for the intake, check in and tracking of our clients. This gives us the ability to see what communities we are serving, and where we already have a rich bed of relationships for future outreaches around us! As the food crisis in the USA becomes more and more real (not the amount available, but the distribution of it), our pantry has had to adapt by finding new food sources... which we have! Please pray for Melissa Balsamello and her team as they serve!

Boutique (a.k.a. Closet)

Our boutique is a thrift shop led by Gilda Webster and her team of faithful and diligent volunteers! The Closet serves two fundamental purposes; namely providing clothing to families in need and generating some income that helps us fund our ministry efforts. We are currently in the midst of our winter drive, and are in need of great quality winter clothing for people of all ages. Please bring them during our open hours (Mo, Th 10-1, Sat 10-12). Come and check out this wonderful store with a selection of new and gently used, selected clothing items! The money from sales goes to support the ministry, so come join in!

Garden and Farmer's Market

Through the efforts of Gail McGuiness and a tight circle of dedicated volunteers, the Garden has generated well over 3000 lbs of vegetables this year for distribution to needy families in our area through the pantry! Amazing! Volunteers are needed now for year-end efforts as we move rapidly toward winter! This year we also began partnering with "America's Grow-a-Row", as Diane Huntington and her team bring fresh, farm grown vegetables and fruits in bulk to families in need in our community!

Orphan Care (Miriam's Heart)

Our orphan care ministry, Miriam's Heart, serves to cultivate a culture of adoption within ZCC through connecting adoptive families, serving as a resource for advice on adoption and/or foster care, and overall making ZCC a place that is home to many adopting (and foster) families! Their work at the church includes the Blend, a bi-monthly gathering of adoptive & foster families, and many other informative events such as the Adoption & Foster Care 101 class. This year, the "Empowered to Connect" Training is available to the church with certified trainers, Russ & Allison Highton, to equip adopting and foster parents to better understand and respond to the needs of traumatized children.

Love as Jesus Loved...

Mission Fest

This year there were about 600 people coming through Mission Fest, which is a great event to connect with the whole range of outreach ministries- "find your fit" is our theme. The idea is to help people engage as families in an exploration of where they may fit in the many local and international outreaches of the church. About 100 signed up for more information and/or to serve in various areas!

Partnerships

- Zarephath Health Center continues to provide critical medical care to those in our community who would otherwise have no other options.
- Love True, a partner group focused on prevention and rehabilitation of victims of human trafficking in NJ, is offering a new training program for parents to help in the effort at home.
- Enactus from Raritan Valley is helping launch an account for car repair for families in need.
- Stonecrest Community Church continues to partner with our pantry outreach in collecting toiletries and school supplies
- City Serve initiative has continued to expand in the state, and the justice track (led by Mark Avery and team) have equipped churches to engage more effectively against trafficking.
- America's Grow-a-Row led by Chip Pailex gave us a palette full of apples last year for distribution and is a key partner in our future plans to have a "free farmers market" serving our area
- God has opened doors for us in the NJ Human Trafficking Coalition and the Attorney General's Task Force on Human Trafficking (Faith-based committee) to bring us to the cutting edge of cooperation for justice in NJ.

International Mission

Haiti

The Joy of Living Orphanage was founded by Angel and Sylbie in 2011 to support children affected by HIV and AIDS in Haiti. The orphanage staff work in collaboration with local agencies and churches to care for 20 AIDS affected children. They have now moved into a new location, and building has started for a permanent place on their own land. The Mud Run this year was very effective in helping raise around \$30,000 in additional funds for the building that will eventually be home to this ministry.

Nicaragua

Partnering with Pastor Hunter in City Church, Cincinnati Ohio, this mission initiative is led by Chris Ottenstroer and Rich Patino as members of the church engage with a national pastor in church construction, orphanage visitation, tailoring training and a feeding program. The approach is to resource, train and equip local pastors and missionaries in an effort to spread the gospel and advance the Kingdom of God in Nicaragua. This program intentionally links discipleship with outreach.

India

It was a blessing to have a visit on our side of the world this year from Laxmaiah Garika who leads Happy Home for AIDS-affected orphans in India! The work continues in Khammam under Laxmaiah and his wife Esther caring for 70 children in their orphanage. Also, Christian Service Union (CSU), our primary partner in India, continues to serve “the least of these” (orphans, disabled, aged and lepers) in Telangana, India. This ministry continues to serve even as a drawn out legal battle extends into another year. Please pray the strength and wisdom of the staff and board of CSU as they continue to lead so many ministries which both demonstrate and declare the Good News of Jesus Christ in a Hindu area.

Liberia

We were recently blessed with a visit from our Liberia director, Luther Tarpeh, to ZCC, who brought us an encouraging message borne out of great suffering in his nation due to the Ebola crisis. Our missionaries, Jen and Steve, went back into Liberia during the Ebola breakout and were a key part of the regional strategy which eventually led to an Ebola-free nation. With your support, since Po River Medical Clinic opened 2 years ago, hundreds have traveled long distances to receive hope, healing and care that would otherwise not be available to them. Also, the next buildings planned in the growth plan at Po River Medical Clinic (and at Pillar’s Ocean View School in Buchanan) are nearing completion!

Highlights and Updates

People and Places

- The Ebola crisis has officially ended in Liberia, signaling an end to a disease that has taken the life of Luther Tarpeh’s sister and a key pastor in our partner’s work in Liberia.
- Cliff Walling has stepped down as lead coordinator for the men’s prison, handing the work off to Mike Farnham who has served in this position previously.
- Jessica Sanchez has resigned as lead coordinator for the Closet, handing the work off to Gilda Webster who is now leading this ministry.
- We will be changing the name of the “Closet” to “Boutique” to better represent our offering to customers, as well as to better affirm the God-given dignity of the people we serve.
- Don Sunshine has held 2 trainings on evangelism at ZCC, and we are booking him for another in March of 2016. If you have not attended one of these trainings, please plan to join us!
- Sunita Hall is stepping up to coordinate Pillar’s Child Sponsorship program, which has an impact on several of ZCC’s partners overseas. She is now also serving as an assistant to Mona Patel (Program Director) in Urban Impact!

This coming year

- We will be celebrating our first Culture Fest at ZCC where we will get a chance to savor and celebrate the richness of cultures in ZCC’s community, showing how God is glorified in each!
- This October, Mark Avery is leading an initial vision trip to Nepal to explore an option for our church to engage in mission to an unreached people group (Tibetan Buddhist).
- After an initial call for those interested in tutoring (both receiving and providing), Gina Petrusky will be starting a pilot tutoring program serving our church and community early 2016.