



The Sparrow's Nest Mission Church

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Dear Friends,

Happy New Year! We are pleased to report that all ministries of The Sparrow's Nest are off to a great start! With this first newsletter of 2008, we wish to update you on the ongoing ministries, inform you of the many volunteer opportunities and give you the highlights of 2007.

Life Skills Academy

We are thrilled to report that this ministry, for so long an unrealized dream, has had a wonderful first year!

The After-school Tutoring Program is designed to provide homework help for middle school and high school students who need it. We currently have 18 – 25 at-risk students receiving tutoring from 18 volunteer tutors! The reports from teachers are very positive; they've seen improvements in the students in all areas, including attitude, behavior and academics!

The Jump Start Program assists people in moving toward employment. We host seminars to encourage and teach skills that enhance employability. These include personality profiles, resume writing, and mock interviewing. We have had two young homeless men successfully put their new skills to use and find jobs!

Beach Week 2007 Once again we traveled with 60 youth to Panama City Beach in June. This is always an exciting event for the youth ministry. Many of the kids involved in our group have never seen the ocean or experienced such a retreat. We pair up with two other Athens churches, Crossroads Community Church and Harvest Church, and put together five days of fun activities and positive, impacting messages. Several kids received Christ for the first time and others rededicated their lives to the Lord. We held a baptism in the Gulf of Mexico. Awesome! We are grateful for all the support we receive in making this trip possible. Through car washes and sponsors, the \$4,400.00 this trip cost was completely covered! Glory to God!

Following the trip, several of our boys joined a small group Bible study with Pastor Earl to further their knowledge of God and His word while continuing regular church and youth group attendance. We covet your prayers for the ongoing spiritual growth of these young people.

Salvation! Last year, through all the various ministries, we have recorded 147 salvations! And, 10 people have received Christ as their Lord and Savior this year. Hallelujah!

Volunteers: In 2007, we saw many new faces around The Sparrow's Nest. Dozens of volunteers come from the University of Georgia, area churches, and other schools. Volunteers are vital to running the diverse areas of the mission. There are many different opportunities to volunteer. Please look over the following list and consider how you might play a part in the ministry.

Cooking: The Sparrow's Nest provides meals twice a week as well as snacks several times during the week. Consider gathering a group of friends to prepare and serve lunch at 11:30 a.m. on Thursdays before the mid-day chapel service or dinner at 6:00 p.m. on Thursdays before our youth group. Also, snacks are served during Holy Suds, and coffee and snacks are served during morning hours each day. Great time to get to mingle and minister to the folks!

Tutoring: Volunteers are welcomed for the after school program on Wednesdays from 4:00 – 6:00 p.m.

Holy Suds: Volunteers host the Holy Suds homeless day services ministry on Mondays from 10:30 – 1:00 p.m. and Thursdays from 1:00 – 3:30 p.m. This entails signing folks in to use the facility for laundry and showers, fellowshiping with the group and involving those who are interested in a devotion and prayer time.

Sponsor a Food Drive (or other collection): Hundreds of Athens' most needy residents come through the doors of the "Dream Center" each month. There are several ways you can jump on board to help them, even if you aren't available during the hours of operation! Several items are needed on a regular basis. Read over the examples below:

- Collect laundry soap, bleach, towels, washcloths, soap and shampoo for the homeless day services. You or your small group could collect trial sized soaps, shampoo, lotion, razors, toothbrushes, toothpaste etc., and put together "personal care" packets to be given out.
- Sponsor a Food Drive and collect items for our Food For Friends program and the emergency food pantry. Some specific items for a food drive: canned meats – tuna, chicken, salmon; canned soups; ramen noodles; evaporated milk; canned vegetables – green beans, corn, spinach, collards, peas, diced tomatoes, potatoes; canned juices – purple grape, apple, orange, prune; macaroni and cheese; pasta; crackers; rice; grits; breakfast cereals; peanut butter; and canned fruit.
- Collect much needed baby care items: diapers, wipes, blankets, bottles (new).
- Collect school supplies: The beginning of the school year is an obvious time to take on this project. Many students have a hard time being prepared for school and their studies because they do not have basic school supplies throughout the year. We like to keep our school supply cupboards well-stocked to help with this. Items needed are: pens, pencils, mechanical pencils, backpacks, binders, filler paper, markers, crayons, poster board, etc.

Christmas Toy Giveaway

This ministry has grown tremendously over the years. This year's Toy Giveaway was a great blessing. Each year, we try and learn new things, new people come on board, and God does an amazing work. It is heartwarming to hear the feedback from volunteers and recipients alike. The Lord touches both in such awesome ways. We are grateful for the 550 families who received toys and the 225 people who volunteered.

3R Helping Center

The 3R Helping Center with Pastor Tommy York expresses the mercy and agape love of God to people in need. Practically, this involves helping people who seek recovery from addiction, reentry from prison or jail, and restoration from any type of destructive life circumstance.

Some of the folks come to our regular meetings on Sunday, Monday or Thursday. Others come for food, clothes, or other assistance offered at the mission. We attempt to assess their situation and offer counsel, information, or other assistance as appropriate within our guidelines and resources. The goal is to lovingly help the person in a way that is redemptive and restorative. Often the assistance does not involve any financial cost, but we have helped about 20 individuals financially so far this year. Some examples include:

- Medication and baby supplies for young woman in transition.
- Assistance with moving for family in transition.
- Bus transportation to Augusta for homeless veteran.
- Phone card for homeless man to maintain contact with his family.
- Fuel for older man released from jail to return to his home in another town.
- Bus ticket for homeless man released from jail seeking recovery in Atlanta.
- Temporary housing for homeless man at local pay-by-night shelter.
- Supplies (sheets, towels, toiletries) for young man entering 6 week Christian recovery program.
- Fuel for homeless man using his truck to travel to work.
- Local bus passes for several homeless and/or indigent individuals.
- Meals for many individuals either homeless or in transition to recovery or other services.

Have you ever encountered a homeless person or panhandler on the street or come in contact with someone in situations like those above and weren't sure how to help? This poses a dilemma. "Should I give this person money? How can I find the information they need? In the face of such large problems, how can I help?" With our experience in ministry and the resources provided by team members, we are able to assist these individuals in small and sometimes big ways to help them take the next step in their journey of restoration.

Thank you for your continued love and support. We could not do it without you. May the Lord bless you and yours this happy New Year!

Your Brother and Sister in Christ,