



Port Austin Bible Campus

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PABC Newsletter #6 — September 2015

Helping the Homeless in the "Thumb" of Michigan

Homeless Children's Ministry Expands

After months of planning and prayer, PABC has stopped providing on-campus housing to anyone in the sex offender registry. This will allow us to accept families which we previously could not. Since its first year of ministry to the homeless, PABC has tried to walk the tightrope of serving both homeless children and homeless registered sex offenders. PABC screened offenders and rejected ones we considered dangerous. We had separate buildings for the two and kept them apart except for a few supervised events. PABC never had any complaints of improper behavior between its offender and child Guests. Nevertheless, some government and homeless service workers still view it in the simplest of terms: Children and registered sex offenders should not be at the same facility no matter what other efforts are made to provide for the safety of the children. So some will not recommend or allow children to come to PABC as long as registered sex offenders are anywhere on campus.

We discussed this issue with Child Protective Service workers, probation/parole officers, prosecutors and others. Most of them felt we were doing a good job and that our methods were working. Those opposed to children at PABC had never visited the campus and declined our invitations. Even so, we realize that our ministry is not supervised by any legal or government agency. It has no safety rating, classification or inspection schedule. What would happen to the professional career of an authority who allowed a child to go to a facility with registered sex offenders, and the child became a victim there? Even though we have a good track record and they might visit PABC today and find it safe, they cannot know what might happen in the future. So a few state workers have told parents within their jurisdiction they would not be able to keep their children if they live at PABC.

We realized there was no amount of talking or no legal action which could solve this problem. It is not a freedom of

religion issue. We are free to provide any kind of ministry we want; Courts, government workers and other homeless services are free to recommend it or forbid it to those whom they serve. If PABC is to be effective, it must minister in a way that others can accept.

Some reading this announcement may ask: "Why did it take PABC five years to figure this out?" The reason we accepted both is because their needs are so great. If parents are not able to provide shelter for their children each night, Michigan law enforcement is generally obligated to report this to Child Protective Services, and parents usually lose custody of their children. This is traumatic for the children, requires a lengthy process for their return, and is expensive for the state and the families. For fathers with children, large families, and other situations, PABC is the only option in Michigan's thumb.

Similarly, people on the sex offender list have few options where they can stay—especially right after they leave incarceration. Nearly all will go right back to jail or prison if they do not have an address. We must realize that our legislatures have not decreed "life in prison" for a senior and freshman in high school who mutually agree to have sex. Biblically, it is immoral and wrong. Yet some public schools teach "safe sex" without bothering to teach the students that if they are the wrong ages and somebody decides to prosecute them, that the older one can do a couple years in prison and have to register as a sex offender for life. Do we want to change that to life in prison because we prevent them from finding a place to live? See the Off Campus Housing Ministry article, below, to understand what PABC is doing to find housing for people away from the PABC campus.

In summary, **PABC now has no registered sex offenders living on its campus, and will not allow them in the future.** Because of this, we will be able to help more families with children!

Pasta House Dinner 10/13/15

Save Tuesday, October 13 for a delicious dinner in the

Kinde Pasta House Ballroom! Come any time between 4:30 and 7:30 PM for a full pasta buffet with salads,

beverages and desserts. Tickets are \$10, half of which will go to the Bible Church Homeless Coalition. If you have never been to the Pasta House, this is a great reason to come: 337 Main, Kinde, MI 48445.

The evening will also feature live music from local artists,

Five Years & 30,000 Bed-nights

PABC completed five years of ministry to homeless people this July, 2015. During that time, we provided over 30,000 bed-nights for 146 men, 114 women and 88 children. At least 75% of these Guests left PABC to stable housing situations.

Most of the children at PABC come with a parent or guardian, but we have had three unaccompanied 17-year olds whose home lives had become intolerable. Of those three, one went on to college, one returned to an improved home life and the other went to prison. It is not easy to undo years of gang, drug and crime experience.

Many families have stayed together and individuals have returned to productive lives because of the efforts of the PABC staff and the Bible Church Homeless Coalition and other supporters! Nearly all of our Guests have learned more about the Bible and many have improved their relationship with God!

silent auctions, and other fun events. This is a great opportunity to have a good meal with a lot of other caring people and learn a little more about the ministries to homeless people in the Thumb. For more information, call Charlotte (989-738-8772) or Norm (989-738-7700).

In addition to those mentioned above, an additional 228 people contacted PABC looking for a place to stay, but they found another solution. These non-residents consisted of 97 men, 78 women and 53 children. Most of them planned to come to PABC but found another solution at the last minute. Some were refused by PABC and referred to substance abuse treatment programs. Others were referred to other shelters with more applicable services or which were closer to their job, family and potential housing.

Thanks to continued local support from the Bible Church Homeless Coalition, we are working toward the long-term viability of PABC. As more jobs leave the Thumb and our nation as a whole, and as government programs continue to struggle for financing, we believe it is essential to have a group of caring Christians provide emergency and transitional housing, as well as the understanding that God loves them and there is a purpose for their lives. See the tract accompanying this newsletter [*The Good News of the Bible*](#) for an example of the teaching our Guests receive here.

Bill Denbrock Benefit a Success!

Bill Denbrock's Big Band performed at the Bible Church Homeless Coalition's first benefit concert at Gallup Park on July 18th. The free event was held in conjunction with a bake sale and sandwich lunch sale. The group played classic big band numbers like *String of Pearls* as well as more recent numbers like the *Hawaii Five-O* theme. The crowd was also treated to the spirited voice of Kent Gabrielson singing classics such as *Georgia on My Mind* and *Summertime*.

Children's games, crafts and door prizes provided fun for everyone. Even though there was rain in other parts of the thumb, Gallup Park stayed dry for the entire event.

\$530 was raised and about 90 people attended. The leftover sandwiches and baked goods were given to the Port Austin Bible Campus homeless ministry. We are looking forward to similar events next year.



The Bill Denbrock Big Band in Gallup Park.

A Minute in the Life of PABC

It is Monday, April 13, 2015 and as I return to my office from our dining hall with some warmed up leftovers for lunch, I think of all the things that are going on at once with the PABC Guests, Staff and Volunteers. I am thinking enough about this minute to take an hour or so to write it all down so others may understand the complexity of some of the issues

that we face. I left out the names, as this article may be on the Internet for some years, and those involved might be better off if employers, landlords and others did not find out their association with a homeless ministry

1. In our dining hall, a young lady volunteer is starting a women's Bible Study. She has been here several weeks and

has provided a great service, getting women together to listen to a stirring video presentation and talk about it afterward. Four of our female Guests are attending: a mother of two elementary age boys and three single, middle-aged women. Years of ministry experience and numerous writings on the subject indicate that women tend to talk more and are more open in a group of all women. Without a staff member present, they are more likely to speak openly—some would be more worried about “saying the wrong thing” if a staff member were present.



PABC guest recovering from working at a dairy job. Even though dairies work hard to keep clean, the huge quantity of manure leaves opportunity for bacterial infections.

2. One Guest—missing from the study—is in the Intensive Care Unit of a local hospital. Even though she is very small in size, she had been working a dairy job, herding milk cows around. She became too ill to work, but did not want to burden us with taking her to the hospital. We took her anyway. In some ways, we are her family right now. She moved three hours away to start a new life free of the problems of her past. Most of her close friends are still struggling with drug use, alcohol addictions, crimes and immorality. She still loves her husband, but she is not going back to that lifestyle and is encouraging him to get out as well.

3. A male guest got into a car with one of our staff members to work a day job in Bad Axe, Michigan. An older local resident calls PABC occasionally when she needs someone for household labor. This is the third PABC guest whom she has hired. These sparse on-call jobs do not help a Guest

afford their own housing, but they do restore confidence in their ability to work, and they do give them cash to take care of some of their own needs, rather than being completely dependant on others.

4. Our Staff member is going to Bad Axe for two other purposes as well. He has personal shopping to do and needs to deposit some of the offerings we have received. It is rare that anyone from PABC ever makes a car trip for only one purpose.



Preparing a vehicle for more PABC transportation.

5. Another one of our Guests departed over an hour ago to drive a Guest couple to a supervised visit with their child. Neither one of these Guests had been raised by their own biological parents. They had their baby before they had stable housing and the ability to take care of him. Their baby is in foster care, but they are working to get him back. Making their weekly visits is an important part of this process. He now works a night job and she is looking for work. They plan to be in their own housing later this week.

6. The driver, above, has lived at PABC for over a year, but has proved to be responsible and has been trusted to drive other Guests and do other complex work for us at PABC

7. Another older Guest is busy packing up after staying at PABC seven months. He has always helped to pay his utility bills, but has also gradually saved up enough to buy a ticket to a far western state. His kind, peaceful nature will be missed.

8. Another Guest just called from Bad Axe, asking for someone to take him between a health-care provider and a pharmacy. The medical system pays for some trips, but not this one. One of our Staff members who is working a job today will take this man to the pharmacy on her way home, and pick up the other Guest working the day job in Bad Axe.

9. Yet another Guest was using our phone and our computer to call friends to get some gas money so that we can take him home. He came here from a place about two hours away to take a part-time live-in job. The job turned out not to pay as promised. When he objected, he was required to leave. The

local Sheriff called at 2:00 A.M. two days ago and asked if we could take him.

10. Another one of our Guests is at medical appointments, fighting for his life with cancer.

11. Another Guest is preparing to drive the father of the two elementary-age boys mentioned above to his job at a dairy. He will be working a 16-hour shift today.

12. And there is one Guest probably sitting in the men's dorm, struggling with depression. He has a master's degree but he was unable to work for a few years and got behind on his student loan and child support. Companies in his field will not hire people who are in student loan default, and he will never be able to earn enough money in an unskilled job to pay his loan back. Student loans cannot be eliminated

through bankruptcy—without a miracle, he will always be in debt. He needs encouragement and opportunity. He is a nice, kind and gentle man.

Oh, and then there is me, Norman Edwards, taking an hour to write this article. Somebody has to tell the story so others can know what it's like. Do poor people sometimes make bad decisions that keep them poor? Yes. Do they also work hard at times? Yes! Do they also suffer from trouble not of their own doing? Yes! We all have our struggles, but when we can help our neighbor, we need to.

If someone has enough money to live well and sees a brother or sister in need but shows no compassion—how can God's love be in that person? (1 John 3:17.)

Off Campus Housing Ministry

As another option for people with special needs, PABC is coordinating an Off Campus Housing Ministry for Huron, Sanilac and Tuscola counties. PABC provides a questionnaire to responsible Christian home-owners—"Hosts"—who would be willing to have homeless Guest(s) stay with them under conditions that they specify. For example, Hosts can determine whether they will accept men, women, families, criminal backgrounds, pets, people with vehicles, people who need transportation, Guests who want to work, Guests who are disabled, Guests who need mentors, etc. Of course, hosts have the option to get out of the ministry at any time.

The list of Hosts and the locations of their houses is kept strictly confidential. PABC has learned that big difficulties can arise from neighbors who oppose homeless ministries—often without knowing anything about the ministries or the people involved. Some are afraid that homeless people will do something bad to them. They do not know that homeless people are more likely to be depressed or disabled than they are to be offensive or aggressive. They do not realize that the waitress, maid, clerk or mechanic that served them today might currently be a homeless person. By keeping the Host names and locations of Off Campus Housing confidential, many neighbors are saved from much unnecessary fear.

PABC assists with the interview process and helps the host avoid the most difficult guests that PABC learned to reject. PABC recommends rules and procedures. It is vital to know how to legally treat people as "guests" rather than "tenants". If serious problems arise, Guests can be removed from the home quickly where tenants usually require a weeks-long eviction process. PABC assists with any Guests that need to be removed, either by offering them a place at PABC, if possible, or taking them to another program elsewhere.

Off Campus Housing is preferable or essential in situations like these:

- Guests need to be near a job, school or medical facility which is too far away for a daily commute from PABC.
- Guests need to be a certain distance from their child's other parent and PABC is too far.
- Guests are applying for a housing program in Sanilac or Tuscola counties and need to live there to qualify.
- Guests suffer from anxiety in large groups of people.
- Guests are on the sex offender registry and cannot live on the main PABC campus.
- Guests need the one-on-one mentoring more easily provided in a home situation.

Taking part in this ministry is for Christians who have faith that God will give them the strength, wisdom and protection needed. There is no insurance or guarantees. Sometimes surprises occur, but God has brought us safely through five years and 360 guests without any major harm. There is no payment doing this, though some Guests can and do help with utility bills and/or household work. PABC can provide food, furniture, clothing and other items which it has been given for this purpose. We encourage our Hosts to fast and pray about it before beginning. More information is available here: portaustin.net/homeless/Offcampus.html These Bible verses sum up the ministry:

Is this not the fast that I have chosen: To loose the bonds of wickedness, To undo the heavy burdens, To let the oppressed go free, And that you break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, And that **you bring to your house the poor who are cast out**; When you see the naked, that you cover him, And not hide yourself from your own flesh? Then your light shall break forth like the morning, Your healing shall spring forth speedily, And your righteousness shall go before you; The glory of **the LORD shall be your rear guard (Isaiah 58:6-8).**

* end of September 2015 issue *