



Port Austin Bible Campus

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PABC Newsletter #7 — October 2017

Helping the Homeless in the "Thumb" of Michigan

NOMADS Repair PABC Buildings

NOMADS Mission Volunteers just completed three weeks serving the PABC homeless ministry. They repaired drains, sinks and pipes; patched leaky roofs; replaced bad flooring, patched and painted ugly walls; and a host of other important

repairs. They used their expertise to go through the PABC garage jumble to keep the valuable items and discard the junk accumulated over the years. They were a tremendous encouragement and blessing to all the PABC staff.



Nancy Bitterling, minister of the Port Austin United Methodist Church (Port Austin United Protestant Church), arranged for the NOMADS to come. They are a United Methodist ministry assisting with construction and

maintenance of churches and charitable ministries. NOMADS members own RVs and volunteer their skills and time as they are able. Most are retired couples who have been involved in construction, maintenance and ministry for many years. Sites where they work must provide hookups for their RVs and a

meeting room—the NOMADS do the rest. They work four days per week, and then use the rest of the time for touring. For them it is half ministry, half vacation with free hookups.

They do take their ministry seriously. One of their banner scriptures is James 2:17: "Faith, if not accompanied by action, is dead." They start each working day with a devotion. Each family takes a turn leading it. They sing songs from their hymnal—some customised to describe NOMADS work, then share Bible verses, encouraging stories or other devotional material. Many of the NOMADS have worked to recover from hurricanes, earthquake and other devastations. The PABC staff was able to participate in these devotions and led one on Job 37—about God's control of storms—on the morning when Hurricane Irma reports were coming in.

Our NOMAD group consisted of a leader, a retired minister, who did an outstanding job of keeping supplies and materials coming to campus as needed—patched and painted as well. A retired master plumber and an engineer took on the big

projects and accomplished more than we expected. It would have cost PABC thousands of dollars to hire out all of this work—thousands that we have never had. In addition to this help, the NOMADS office provided \$1500 in grants for materials. The wives of the above three men plus a single NOMAD woman did the scraping and painting that has been needed since our homeless ministry began.

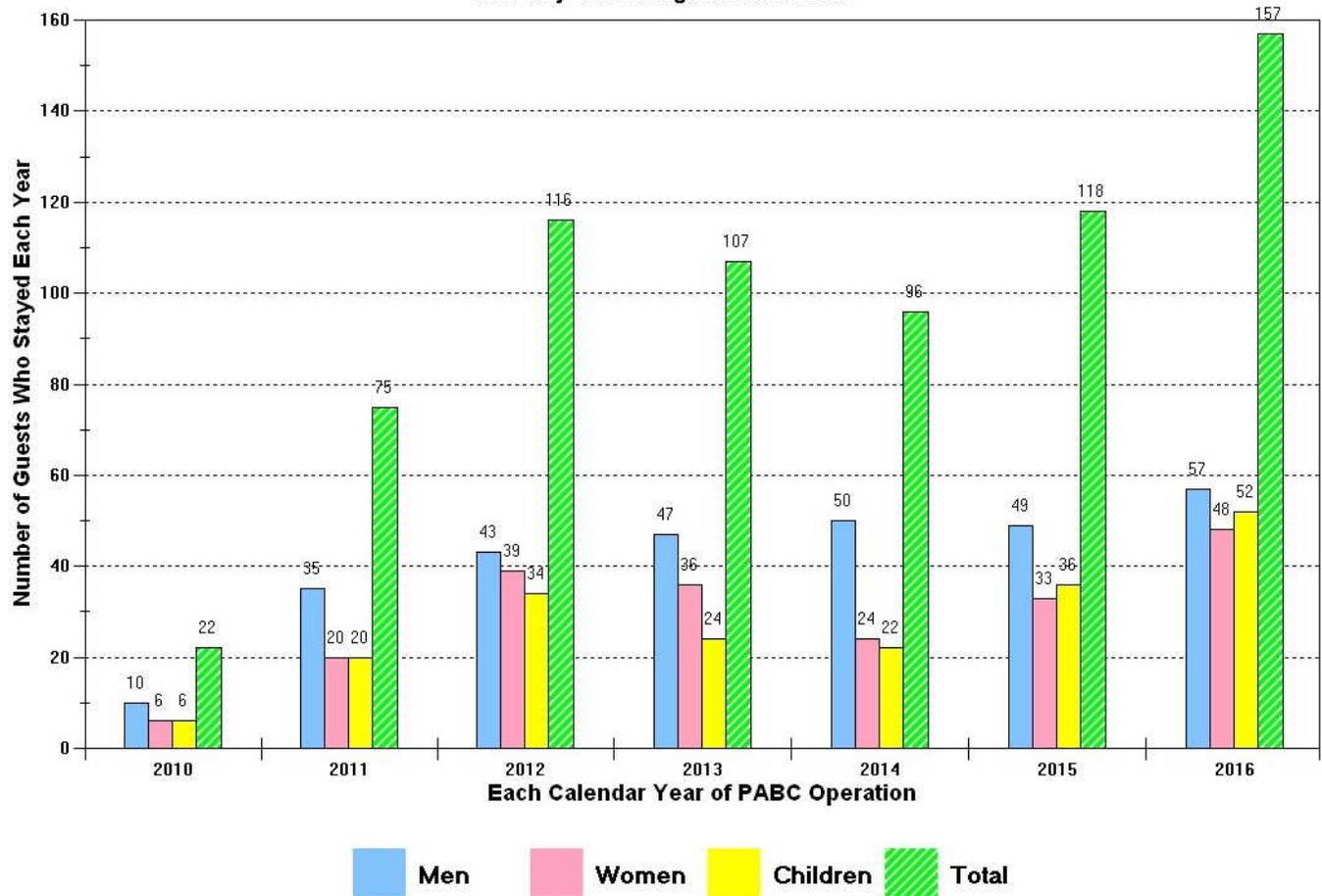
PABC has been approved as a NOMADS project site for next year. They appreciated the camaraderie of the United Protestant Church and the three wonderful group meals brought by the Caseville Rivers Edge Church. They also enjoyed working with PABC staff member James Hall, who assisted them from start to finish. They appreciated the beauty, wide open spaces and cool temperatures of the Thumb, and finally, the generous electric hookups: 3 x 50Amp, 1 x 30Amp and 3 x 20Amp. The PABC Staff and Guests appreciated all the things that now function and look good. We all look forward to their return in 2018.

Busiest Year 2016

Our 2016 was so busy, we did not produce a single newsletter in it! Thank you so much to those who continued

to support this homeless ministry, in spite of our lack of communication! This was our biggest year to date.

Guests Who Lived At PABC Each Year
from July 2010 through December 2016



As you can see in the above graph, 157 people stayed with us during 2016—57 men, 48 women and 52 children. We provided 11,349 bed-nights of housing that year, exceeding our previous maximum of 9,946 in 2015. (Each night that each guest stays counts as one bed-night.)

Of the 157 people who stayed during 2016, **96 had positive outcomes**, 38 had negative outcomes (32 required to leave, 6 went to jail or prison), 13 left without telling us and 10 were still at PABC. Of the 96 positive outcomes, 33 entered government housing programs, 23 provided for their own housing, 20 left to stay with family, 14 stayed with friends, 3 went to other shelters and 3 needed medical facilities.

Fully 33% of our Guests were children this year. Several Guest families were close to losing their children—for a variety of reasons. Michigan court decisions require parents to have access to a dwelling every night for their children. Just one night on the street can cause their children to be taken away. Also, living with occasionally violent people—even though children were never harmed—can be considered a “failure to protect” and result in children being removed from the parents. They may not get them back for months, even if a dwelling is found or the threats are removed sooner than that. Because PABC is able to take families on a same-day basis, we usually prevent what would otherwise be a traumatic family breakup. Families as large as seven have stayed with us for only a few days.

PABC has made its facilities available for free weddings for couples that have been living together and thought that they

could not afford a wedding. As far as we know, nearly all of the couples that married at PABC are still together.

Some Guests have struggled with substance abuse for years—losing their Drivers Licenses and many obtaining convictions. Some have now successfully completed their parole or probation, obtained housing, and resumed control of their lives. Others stay out of trouble for a few months, then go back to it. When they leave, we try to remind them of their success—even if short—and God's desire that they recover. Our former Guests sometimes continue to call to report success or to gather encouragement. A few we have to remind that God created them for a purpose and that ending their life is not an option. So far, so good!

From 2010 until this writing, PABC has provided a total of 53,714 bed nights, 47% for men, 28% for women and 25% for children. PABC has provided housing to 598 people (247 men, 189 women and 162 children). We have received requests for housing from 387 additional people whom we helped to find another solution. Some of these people we concluded were too difficult or dangerous to bring to PABC and its surrounding community.

With so many guests, we have had little time to keep up with our Facebook page or our website. We know this is important, so we are planning to do a better job in the future. You can read the stories (without names) of all who contact PABC here: www.portaustin.net/pabc/homeless/PABC%20Guest%20Log.html We want to encourage you to read the next article and to continue to support this effort.

Planning PABC Longterm Success

The past seven years of PABC have demonstrated the need for a Huron County homeless shelter—especially for men and families. PABC would have to turn away people without the help it receives from local churches. This help has not been through our own "marketing" efforts, but we believe people have been stirred up by God because ultimately, He cares for the needy people of the Thumb.

Norman and Marleen Edwards and Bill Buckman have lived on the former Port Austin Air Force Base property since 2004, carrying out the mission that they believe God gave to them. They have been assisted by various others over the years—some staying a few months, others a few years. Everyone has been a volunteer—either working part time or receiving a retirement/disability check. The Edwards are now retirement age themselves. It is no longer as easy to pick up new homeless Guests or resolve disputes among existing Guests in the middle of the night—and still tend to all the necessary work the next day.

The Edwards now have three children and seven grandchildren in Tennessee, and a new ministry opportunity awaiting there. They have been praying for two years for God to send a new family to run the ministry. Last March, someone read in his local church the “PABC Update” column

from a small Christian magazine where this need for a new director was expressed. After finishing, he said he was not even sure why he was reading it.



Nevertheless, Jeff and Judy Kramer were in that church meeting and they felt they knew why he was reading it. After much prayer and conversations with the Edwards, they made a visit to PABC in June, then later decided they want to come to serve the Homeless people in Michigan's Thumb.

The Kramers have a wealth of past experience helpful for this ministry. They have been life-long Christians, dedicated to reading God's word and putting it into practice. They have lived with the Amish, ran a dairy, and most recently, managed an insulation business with over 150 trucks. They have home-schooled their five children. **They are arriving today, as this is being mailed!**

Both the Edwards and the Kramers will live on the PABC

\$35,000 Electric Bill Paid Off!

By the grace of God we have paid off the \$35,595 electric bill that we reported in our June 2014 issue! The money came from a variety of sources—some steady, some sporadic. We made every \$2500 monthly payment, though some were a few days late. Our electric company, DTE, never complained or charged extra for the minor delays. They were impressed that we were able to pay it at all.

Even while we were making those big payments, we also invested in some cost-saving upgrades. We installed more efficient gas appliances—furnace, bathroom heater, dryer and stove in our women's dorm. We replaced incandescent and fluorescent bulbs with LED bulbs. The payback period should be about one year. We still get monthly electric bills for nearly \$2000 during the worst of the winter, but summer bills are often less than \$1000. We need that break, as we

property for the next year to make sure that the transition is orderly and that the ministry can continue in full effectiveness. The Edwards will stay until the transition is complete. The Kramers are full of good ideas on how to improve the ministry. They have friends and relatives very interested in coming to join them. They are seeking more involvement of other Huron County Christians and church groups. We are looking forward to this new phase of God's work in our lives.

still have about \$9000 left of \$33,000 of debt we incurred “keeping this ministry alive” during its early days.

During the past four years, we have required our Guests with jobs or disability income to help pay for the utilities they use. While some people feel it is unfair to ask homeless guests to pay, it is discipline that many of them need. Some would simply spend the money on entertainment, tobacco or various vices. They must learn to pay their rent, utilities and other essential expenses first, so they can stay in their next housing on their own.

Someday, PABC hopes to be completely self sufficient, with on- and off-campus Guest work—supporting the entire ministry. That requires the creation of nearby businesses at which most of our Guests could work. We continue to make plans and invite others to help turn this vision into reality.

Helping Human Trafficking Victims — Not for the Fainthearted

PABC occasionally gives shelter to people who have been victims of human trafficking rented out to others for sex or other types of slavery. We try to be extra patient with them and continue to help them after they leave if possible. Most of their past history is so awful that few people are willing to listen to them or believe their stories. (Yes, some liars fabricate such stories hoping to get them pity and money, but the real victims are consistent and have clear signs of having lived through the horror they describe.) We must remember that Jesus had compassion on all He met—even the most crippled, degenerate and rejected by society.

It is not easy for trafficking victims to begin to trust any kind of authority, whether courts, police, employers, parents or even homeless ministry staff. Our experience has been mostly with people who were trafficked beginning around 10 years old. It really strains their concepts of good and evil. Consider this: Normal children are praised and rewarded for achievements in school, scouting, church, etc.; they are punished for not doing their homework, not doing their chores, breaking things or other kinds of mischief. By contrast, trafficked children are rewarded with hot meals, a nice bed, new clothes, etc. when they please their sex customers; they are not fed and given beatings or other tortures when they do not please their customers. Just as good parents can mold their children into good people, sex

traffickers deliberately try to mold their victims into sex addicts. Starting with young children, they are often effective.

Could these victims escape and ask somebody for help? Some of them are not continuously imprisoned, but go to school and appear normal to outsiders. The answer is that they are very effectively threatened. The children are convinced that if they tell anyone else, they will be tortured for the rest of their lives or killed outright. One victim explained how she and other victims were forced to watch the murder of an uncooperative girl. They never knew the location or the murderer's real names. Another related how her master boasted of his conviction for first degree murder and his 15 years in prison. Yet another victim explained how she was asked to do homework or household chores, then told that she had failed and was tied up and tortured by her foster parents. When she related this abuse to others, the parents were confronted and they said that the girl was reasonably punished for not doing homework and chores, but said she was lying about the tortures. The parents further punished the girl for telling, so she gave up trying. It was not till years later that those foster parents were convicted.

We have had great success helping some former victims. One got away from her “master” by being confined to a psychiatric hospital. She is still on psychiatric meds, but is now happily married with her children at home.

The Ministry that Changes Your Life

The Call of Christ ended a perfectly good fishing business. Yet it trained eternal rulers for the Kingdom.

And so also were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were [fishing] partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men." So when they had brought their boats to land, they forsook all and followed Him (Luke 5:10-11).

Jesus ruined an even more lucrative business when he called another disciple:

After these things He [Jesus] went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, "Follow Me." So he left all, rose up, and followed Him.

Can you imagine making a decision to leave a high-paying government job in just a few minutes? What was Levi (also known as Matthew) thinking? Could he get in trouble for just leaving everything? If it were stolen, would he be blamed?

The conventional wisdom would be to encourage people to keep their jobs so that a group could raise money to start a ministry. But Jesus' approach was simply to end the jobs and plunge into the ministry. Was Jesus even aware of the risks that his disciples were taking with their careers? It is a valid question and Peter asked it:

Then Peter answered and said to Him, "See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore what shall we have?" So Jesus said to them, "Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matthew 19:27-28).

Our Christian lives make the most sense when understood in terms of eternal life. But even now, the Christian can receive the love of God, give out the love of God to a hostile world and have great peace in doing so.

Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. We love Him because He first loved us (1 John 4:17-19).

These same lessons can be learned through many Christian ministries, even if on a smaller scale. One learns to suffer trials, trust God, receive the peace and love of God, and convey it to others who are not always appreciative or immediately responsive. Ministries of God are both a blessing to those being served and those serving. The question to each is: can both groups receive God's blessing?

PABC homeless Guests usually have little trouble receiving the blessing of a place to stay with free laundry, phone and Internet. They also enjoy free food as needed, transportation to jobs and critical appointments, and help obtaining government documents and applying for housing programs. Some may be less appreciative of PABC Bible classes, recovery meetings and rules to help them be more orderly. Most do not want intervention by PABC staff when they stray from rules and Biblical principles. Some are slow to cooperate with finding jobs or doing the paperwork to get into housing programs—they would rather stay at PABC free and create their own rules. A few Guests still want to engage in substance abuse, stealing or promiscuity—but will go to great efforts to try to keep it secret. They do not understand that PABC staff try to prevent them from doing these things for their own good. In other words, they are not ready to receive all of the blessing that God has to offer at PABC.

Christians called of God similarly often receive some, but not all, of His blessings. They appreciate the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for their sins. They appreciate his love and care for them, and promise of eternal life in the future. They read His Word and call upon His name in prayer. But some are called to minister to others as the apostles were called in the Matthew 19 quote above. The apostle Paul explains the mission of Jesus this way:

Therefore I [Paul] endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, We shall also live with Him. **If we endure, We shall also reign with Him.** If we deny Him, He also will deny us. If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself (2 Timothy 2:10-13).

There is nothing like a ministry of service to struggling people to learn the suffering and the love of Christ. This is what we need to "reign with Him". Ministries like PABC are a wonderful place to learn the "loving father" approach with people who have suffered greatly, sometimes because of others and sometimes because of themselves. Some people just need to be heard and receive compassion and love. But we also need to learn when others need "tough love". Sometimes, a Christian must deliver a message like this: "We want to help you, but you need to understand that you did not become homeless because your landlord or former-partner was mean. You were sent out because you have not made your rent/utility payments for 2 months, got drunk and then committed a crime. You need to change. God is very interested in helping you change, but you need to repent to Him and ask Him to change you."

Learning to help people with either mercy or stern correction (as in Matthew 23 & 24) is a Christ-like trait. It cannot be learned so easily in most ordinary jobs. If God is calling you to this, we encourage you to answer—whether it is with PABC or one of many other ministries our Father is doing!

Pasta House Fundraiser in Kinde: October 25, 2017, 4:30 - 7:30 P.M.

Please come to our third annual Pasta House dinner in Kinde, October 25, 2017, between 4:30 and 7:30 P.M. for a great pasta buffet, salad, bread, dessert and beverage. Desserts are home made from some excellent bakers! You can "try and buy" as many of the desserts accompanying the meal will also be there at the bake sale. The cheese cake, cinnamon rolls and fancy cookies were big hits last year!

This is the third event organized by the Bible Church Homeless Coalition for essential needs of the PABC homeless ministry. The last two were a great success and we think this year will be even better. We had hundreds of people attend and raised thousands of dollars. (See pictures.)

Live music will be furnished by Terry Ross and Friends. Last year's was outstanding. These are professional musicians of a quality not often heard in the Thumb. They will play a combination of folk, country and historic music throughout the evening.

During the musicians' breaks, there will be several "50-50" raffles and drawings for theme baskets, some donated by local vendors. These baskets were designed to provide everything you need for a particular fun time or project. See who gets them or win one yourself! Loads of fun for everybody!

The price for this food and fun-filled evening is only **\$10 per adult and \$5 per child up to age 10**. Children who will eat with their own forks need their own tickets. Infants held in laps are free! The Pasta House receives \$5 for every person who goes through the buffet line, and the rest goes to help the homeless. Takeouts are available, but one ticket provides either a meal in the restaurant or a takeout, not both!

The Pasta House is located at 337 Main St in Kinde, MI 48445. Simply take Van Dyke Rd (M-53) to Kinde Rd and turn east, away from the gas station and toward the main town. The Pasta House will be on your left in a half mile. Call Charlotte at 989-738-8772 or Norm 989-738-7700 with any questions.

Tickets to this year's dinner may be purchased at the door, or ordered in advance. You may send a check by mail made out to: **Port Austin Bible Campus, PO Box 474, Port Austin, Michigan, 48467-0474**. Or, you may simply send money via PayPal to **homeless@PortAustin.net**. Use the message line to explain how many "adult" and "child" Pasta House tickets you want. If for some reason you are unable to use your tickets, we will not be charged for your meal, but will use the entire amount to help run the shelter. Free will offerings of any amount are also appreciated.

Thank you for your interest in serving the homeless people of Michigan's Thumb!

