

# THE ROCK JOURNAL

*This Issue: Stories of Compassion*

## ST. PAUL HOUSE: HOSPITALITY LEADS TO GOSPEL

*Dawn and Kevin Meyer are part of a small group in the St. Paul House Church that is focused on reaching internationals. This special focus led to a unique opportunity to show love to a couple in need.*

By Dawn Meyer

Recently our family experienced a unique opportunity to host an Iraqi couple in our home. A mutual friend from church asked us to pray for the couple because they were in a very difficult spot. They were newly married and between housing and jobs. After praying about their situation for several days, my husband and I felt God stir in our hearts to open our home to them. We were fortunate enough to have an extra room in our basement which allowed them to have a bit of privacy while they stayed with us.

Hosting them was a rich and meaningful experience for both the Iraqi family and our family in several ways. They got to experience the day-to-day life of an American Christian family with three young children. The Iraqi family came to Thanksgiving dinner with our extended family (which was very brave of them!) We were also able to learn about Iraqi culture, Muslim beliefs, traditions, and foods.

Our new friends enjoyed sharing their culture with us. The wife even taught our daughter some Arabic. They cooked us delicious Iraqi foods, including fish (which was wonderful despite some reservations our family has with eating fish!) It was such a blessing to see our children grow to care about the Iraqi couple, and in turn, the couple truly loved and enjoyed our children.

One evening towards the end of their stay, we had a wonderful opportunity to share Christ with our new friends. We were able to share our beliefs, Jesus' death on the cross, the hope and forgiveness we receive from the gospel, and how a personal relationship with Christ impacts our lives and transforms us into a new creation. It was a powerful night full of heartfelt sharing, questions, and lots of listening. It truly was beautiful. I was close to tears listening to my husband share what Christ's death on the cross personally means to him.

My husband and I both felt God blessed our time with this special couple. He still blesses it as we continue our friendship and lift them up in prayer. We are so thankful God entrusted this time with them to us.

## FAITH TAKING REAL ACTION

By Karl Quickert

*Dear children, let's not merely say that we love each other, let us show the truth by our actions. 1 John 3:18*

The real test in the Christian life is not what we say we believe, but what we do as a result of what we believe. Jesus Christ sacrificed his life on the cross for us and incurred the wrath and curse of God that we deserved. If that does not move us to action in our life, the faith we say that we have does not really hold much weight.

One of the things that makes me so proud is that our church takes real action. This newsletter chronicles a number of stories of house churches and individuals who have been moved because of Christ to show compassion to others. Some are writing as the recipients of that compassion and others are writing as the administrators.

I think you'll be greatly encouraged and stimulated in your own life to read about these stories of compassion. May we be men and women who are not merely hearers of God's word but doers!

## NORTH HOUSE: LIFTING BURDENS IN A TIME OF CRISIS

By Adam Craven

*So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing  
1 Thessalonians 5:11*

In February, after some prayer and the recommendation of our midwife, we induced labor due to health concerns that had surfaced at the end of Misti's pregnancy. Misti was one week overdue. It was a very long, hard, four-day labor. During our time at the hospital we were "verse bombed." Our house church family texted us verses and told us they were praying for us. This encouraged us tremendously.

After delivering our daughter Macie, the medical staff soon realized that she was very sick. Macie and Misti both developed an infection during labor. We ended up staying in the hospital for 10 days waiting for Macie to be



healthy enough to bring her home. During our hospital stay, our house church family brought us meals. The visits gave us a welcome break from cafeteria food (and expenses) and a lot of encouragement.

After getting home from the hospital, we slowly began to realize that Misti wasn't healing well. She ended

up having surgery due to complications from the delivery. Our Rock family provided meals to us for two full months. This meant Misti had the opportunity to rest and recover, and focus on caring for our daughter.

We were overwhelmed with the blessings, not just by our House Church family, but our extended Rock family, too. We also received donated baby clothes, diapers, gift cards and other very generous gifts. Both of our families were able to witness the Gospel being lived-out in a very tangible way. We are forever grateful for our church family and how they helped lift our burdens during a very tough time.

## BLOOMINGTON HOUSE: BRINGING CHRIST TO MN PRISONS

By Jeromy Darling

In the summer of 2011 God finally opened a door I'd been waiting for for years—an opportunity to play concerts regularly at the Lino Lakes prison. This has been a tremendous opportunity for me to share the Gospel with over 500 inmates both at Lino Lakes, the Shakopee Women's prison and in two prisons in South Dakota.

This April my sister, Celeste Rundquist, and I had the privilege to play at the Shakopee Women's prison. We had played there before, but only for the believers that were apart of a Christian ministry within the prison called IFI (InnerChange Freedom Initiative, an offshoot of Prison Fellowship). This night was different; the concert was open to the entire prison. Celeste

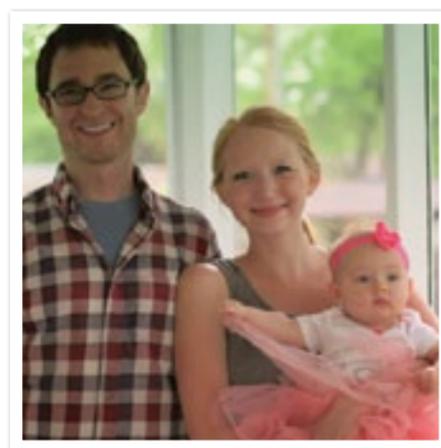
and I were asked to play two back-to-back, one-hour sets for two groups of women. The first group was incredibly emotional by the end of the set as I presented the Gospel and played the final song. Nearly half the room was crying, one gal sitting up front wept as she prayed to receive Christ. Celeste and I ended the set completely breathless and exhausted.

This second group was an ornery bunch, violent offenders, very very broken—in fact I'd never seen a group of women so completely sold to sin. I thought to myself, "This is not going to end well." But after the first song was done, they were hooked, a few already crying. But where the last group dabbed their eyes and sniffed during the final song, this group, this

hardened, violent group had come completely unglued—the sobbing reaching a fever pitch as I myself began to sob talking about the life they'd been denied by their family, the good life I was so desperate to give to my wife and sons, and the life that God could give them—the life He could rebuild through Jesus Christ.

Afterwards, as the women were ushered out, we had a chance (briefly) to chat with a few of them, answer questions and encourage them. Even the security was left speechless. Celeste and I both sat in our cars for a few minutes, trying to process everything that had just happened, praying God would continue to give us many more opportunities just like this.

## FULTON HOUSE: EXTRAVAGANT GENEROSITY



By William Hines

Have you ever had someone do something so nice for you that it made you uncomfortable? Well, our house church recently flabbergasted my wife and I with extravagant generosity, which was both awesome and humbling.

Several months ago, we were handed an envelope as we were leaving house church. On our drive home, my wife

informed me that the envelope had been stuffed with cash and gift cards. In the weeks prior, we had experienced some unanticipated health and financial trials, as well as a brand new baby! Armed with the knowledge of our challenges, our house church targeted and conspired to bless us. We were having a hard time, and they wanted to help us out.

I admit, our initial reaction was not gratitude; it was embarrassment. It feels so good to give to the needy, but being the needy feels awkward. It might sound funny, but we actually had to pray our way to gratitude. And in so doing, we found that God was communicating a few things to us.

First, our church community is a blessing from the Lord. When faced with trials, I am tempted to withdraw from others and try to conquer things on my own strength and merits. But the Bible assures us that we can do nothing worthwhile apart from God (John

15:5), and that God has commanded our faith to be lived out in community with one another (Matthew 22). The dumbest thing we can do when faced with trials, according to the Bible, is to isolate ourselves. We need community.

Second, if we want to be refreshed, we must pursue opportunities to refresh others (Proverbs 11:25). The reason why our house church was so effective in refreshing my family is that we are all positioned in one another's lives so that we know when someone is struggling. That kind of knowledge does not come from arms-length relationships, but from consistent, vulnerable, and deliberate community.

Finally, God is not distant. He is near, and he is active. We were so grateful to be reminded of this as he mobilized our house church in this simple and profound gesture of His love for us. Yes, his gifts are unbalanced and uncomfortable. But he is God. That's his style.

## MINNEAPOLIS HOUSE: RISING UP TO SUPPORT A FAMILY IN HAITI

By KT Lynch

*A sister from the Minneapolis House Church, Karen Van Oss, is engaged to a Haitian man named Zicot Blaizin. Zicot's brother, Bobby, passed away recently. This inspired some saints to hold a grassroots fundraiser for his funeral.*

Bobby Blaizin and his family live in Haiti, and the earthquake in 2010 killed his father and destroyed their family's home. With multiple funerals, the cost of repairs to the family home and the loss of income, the Blaizins were in an extremely difficult financial position.

Bobby had been sick for years and

misdiagnosed with diabetes, malaria and even a voodoo curse. By the time he was finally diagnosed with his real disease, leukemia, he had no more than five days to live.

So when Karen Van Oss joked about having the funeral paid for, it seemed like a no-brainer for Rockers. Karen's friends quickly rallied their time, talents and resources to help meet the financial needs of the family. The Blaizin family was shocked and amazed that people in another country, with minimal connections to them, would unite as they did to raise support. The family was truly touched, and nearly all their financial needs were met.

Many hands and hearts made the event possible from decorating the house with candles, artwork and décor to bringing pastries, homemade desserts, and savory treats. The food, décor and music made a somber event feel bright.

During a musical intermission, Karen stood up to read a brief commentary of how much the evening meant to her and the family: "Zicot and I thank you from the bottom of our hearts for the amazing outpouring of love we are experiencing. It surely is a testament to God's love and faithfulness in our lives."

## LIBERATE.US UPDATE

By KT Lynch

Last spring a team started putting together a website called “Rock Liberated.” The purpose: to reach the next generation through social media and music. “This outreach meets this generation where they’re at and introduces Jesus to them outside of a church building that they may never enter,” said Dirk Spitznagle, a leader for the Liberate .Us website.

The men behind the website hoped their house church members would be willing to post their testimonies to the site, but quickly more house churches saw what was going on and jumped on board. Liberate.Us currently has 65 testimonies posted.

Currently the only social media marketing for Liberate.Us has been Instagram and Twitter. Still it has had more than 16,000 views. At its record high, it was visited 214 times in a single day. Soon Liberated.Us will have its own Facebook page, and a kickoff is planned when their blog gets underway. About 15 talented writers are planning to write one blog post a month on various topics, all relating to being ‘liberated’ in Christ.

“We’re not trying to shove Jesus down people’s throats,” said Tyler Dormanen who has assisted on much of the site’s design. “But we do want to show people that we’re more than their stereotypical ‘bubble’ church.”

Last month Liberate.Us had its first concert in downtown Minneapolis, with another concert planned for June 15 and more to come.

If you would like to get involved with Liberate.Us either by posting your story or utilizing a gift/talent, please contact Dirk at: [dirk@rockthechurch.com](mailto:dirk@rockthechurch.com).

# EAST HOUSE: EXPERIENCING CHRIST’S LOVE LEADS TO SALVATION

By Marc Holtey

Over the past year, people from The Rock, East House and beyond have teamed up to serve and love an East Asian post-doctoral scholar and his family. In February 2013 the husband, wife and their teenaged son arrived in Minneapolis—6,732 miles from home. On their last leg through Chicago’s O’Hare Airport, they lost a substantial amount of cash. The money was intended for renting an apartment, furnishing the apartment, etc.

Upon arrival in the Twin Cities, The Hospitality Center for Chinese (HCC) stepped in to assist. HCC connected the family to Tami Sisson and the East House. A team of people from The Rock helped move them into an apartment in Minneapolis, three blocks away from Southwest High School where their son enrolled in school. Rockers donated furniture for their apartment, provided basic supplies and helped them navigate through this foreign city.

Throughout the year, the family experienced many aspects of American culture as they explored the Twin Cities. More importantly, the family experienced the love of Christ through a number of people God placed in their path. Gospel seeds were sown and they noticed a difference in us, as Christians.

In January, a group of East Housers moved the family out of their apartment as husband and wife prepared to return home. A few different families hosted them for their final weeks until mid-February.



On Sunday, February 16, the Gospel seeds came to fruition. The day before they were to fly back home, we were sharing a sleepy breakfast together. The wife began to ask me in depth questions about Christ and salvation. I shared the Gospel with her in the company of their son (who was translating) and her husband. The Gospel finally became clear to her, and she prayed to receive Christ.

She wanted to get baptized before they left for China...the next day! It was a scramble to find a place to baptize her on short notice. We ended up baptizing her in the Shoreview Community Center pool minutes before it closed. Before the group dispersed, we shared some insights and prayed for the couple and for their journey home. What an amazing day. Praise God!

### AN EAST HOUSE UPDATE:

Here’s a follow up from *The Rock Journal* (February 2014) One Saturday, after an East House night, Jim Schofield had the opportunity to lead Harris to Christ. Harris was baptized at The Rock on March 7.

