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Options for the Church

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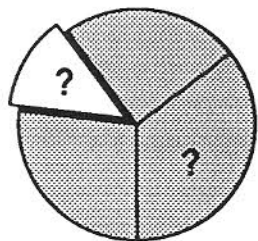
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PTIONS FOR THE CHURCH

The following articles examine different ways in which the poor are being ministered to by members of our churches. Hopefully, they will provide suggestions or ideas of how your church can broaden its ministry to Jesus. These certainly are not the only options. Neither are they the only groups doing valuable things in their particular fields. There are several organizations that do fine work with world hunger relief in our movement. Hopefully, the articles from organizations like Manna, and Health Talents, and from individuals like Holly Allen and A'llyn Collins will stimulate your thinking concerning options available to your church in ministry.

M.A.C.S Memphis Area Cooperative Services

The dream for this impressive ministry began as a project for a graduate student at Harding Graduate School of Religion in Memphis. Billy Evans labored over a report that suggested concrete ways that Memphis area churches could minister with the inner-city poor. Evans suggested the creation of the "Hosea Institute," a para-church organization whose primary emphasis would be a night shelter. While the night shelter never came to fruition, the "Hosea Institute" began as a starting place for discussions among several churches on how similar ministries might develop and proceed.

These discussions resulted in the establishment of M.A.C.S. in January of 1988. At that time Wayne Reed was hired full-time to be the Program Director. Eight churches contribute financially to the support of M.A.C.S., while fourteen churches provide volunteers. The program, overseen by the Sycamore View Church of Christ, originally featured a Health and Hygiene Commodities Outlet that distributed personal hygiene items, household items (cleansers, paper goods, etc.), baby items, children's items (school supplies), over the counter medications, and first aid items. This program continues to grow. In the past year 1,250 persons were helped at the outlet. Of those receiving goods, 84% needed help only once, while

2.75% needed assistance four or more times.

Looking for ways to expand this ministry, Reed traveled to New York City to observe a project called HOPE. HOPE had been using a life skills training program that had met with considerable success over a five year period. Approximately 80% of program participants remained employed in their chosen field one year after the completion of the life skills curriculum. Reed pushed for and received the support of the Memphis churches to begin a similar program of their own. Ron Bergeron, Director of Emergency and Family Services, and Catherine Wood, Classroom Coordinator, were hired by M.A.C.S. to develop this new ministry.

The MACS Life Skills Lab began in April of 1990. Like the HOPE program in New York, M.A.C.S. based their program on the Adkins Like Skills Curriculum. This curriculum is a five stage learning experience that guides participants through the process of selecting, preparing for, acquiring, and maintaining a suitable job. Lab participants learn in small group settings in which they receive constructive criticism and emotional support. Included in the thirteen week curriculum is an eight week internship during which students gain experience in their chosen field. While in the internship participants continue to attend classes and small group sessions to discuss and work-out problems they encounter.

In addition to the base curriculum provided by Adkins, M.A.C.S. has developed and added a spiritual dimension for their program. Each morning, ten minutes prior to the beginning of class, a voluntary

devotional is conducted. In addition, each group counseling session includes a spiritual focus time. Some lab participants also receive sponsorship from an area congregation. In addition to the nurture and support provided, the sponsoring congregation provides basic needs such as housing, furnishings, and the like.

The inaugural class of the MACS Life Skills Labs has done well. They have coined a group nickname, "Safe Dawn." Safe Dawn is an acrostic for Success Achievers Faith Excellence, Dream Warmth New Beginnings. At the time of this writing internships had begun in fields such as upholstery repair, dog training, accounts payable and receiving, and video store management.

Bergeron describes the Life Skills Labs as "without doubt the most exciting thing I've ever been involved with. This is not a crutch for the irresponsible, or a haven for the willingly poor. This is living out Psalms 82:3-4; 'Give justice to the weak and the fatherless; maintain the right of the afflicted and destitute. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.' We feel strongly that souls will be won for God in this."

The churches involved in M.A.C.S. have chosen these far reaching ministries to address a part of the challenge in helping the poor overcome their complex and overwhelming plight. Challenges will continue to confront these churches, especially as participants become Christians. Leaders are currently discussing how best to provide meaningful congregational settings for those converted through this program. In the midst of these challenges, however, M.A.C.S. has modeled a redemptive alternative for ministering with the poor.

Rainbow Days: Breaking the Cycle of Chemical Dependency

An estimated 28 million Americans have at least one alcoholic parent. One out of every three families in America today reports alcohol abuse by a family member. When drug abuse is added to this figure, the number of families affected by chemical dependency is overwhelming. There are no social, cultural, economic, or intellectual boundaries for alcohol and drug abuse. Our churches are not exempt from this problem.

Most of us recognize the tragedy of dependency for the affected adult, but few are aware of the staggering and lingering effects that alcohol or drug addiction can have on families, especially children. What makes recognition of this problem more difficult is the fact

that most children have little or no understanding of how they are being affected— even after they become adults. Research has investigated the specific affects of chemical dependency on children. While differences exist due to the age and sex of the child or parent involved, these children consistently learn to manipulate, to deny what is happening, and to survive at any cost.

Children from homes where there is chemical dependency often adapt to the chaos and inconsistency in their lives by developing an inability to trust, an extreme need to control, an excessive sense of responsibility, and a denial of feelings. All of these survival skills result in low self-esteem, depression, isolation, guilt, and difficulty maintaining satisfactory relationships. These learned behaviors persist throughout adult life, often long after the death of or termination of the relationship with the chemically dependent parent. Even if the parent enters a recovery program, the child's behavior and unhealthy coping skills will continue in adult life.

These problems often remain invisible because many of the coping behaviors tend to be socially acceptable and approval-seeking. Those children who become super responsible and mature for their age frequently get reinforcement for these behaviors. The fact that they are attempting to control their feelings of fear, helplessness, and inadequacy is unknown or overlooked. Like adults, they cope through overwork and other more socially accepted behaviors so that their pain and isolation are ignored and untreated.

Denial is the hallmark of chemical dependency. Denial not only exists in the chemically dependent person, but also in the family— even in society as a whole. The problem of denial is compounded by the fact that affected families become isolated from others. The family "secret" is maintained out of a false sense of loyalty to the family as well as a fear of rejection and judgement from outsiders. The price that the children pay for their silence is high. Because of denial and isolation, these children have no one to validate their reality. The family does not discuss the addiction and will deny the relationship of the chemical dependency to the resulting problems. Traumatic events may occur that are never acknowledged much less discussed and resolved. Day-to-day stresses are ignored. The children begin to question their perceptions of what is actually taking place. Parents may even come out and tell the children that they did not hear or see what in truth they did hear or see.

In addition to denial and isolation, children from chemically dependent homes come to believe that their family is "different." They make excuses to others and themselves believing that outsiders would not understand. Often this is true. One study reported that when family members do risk to reveal the family secret they approach at least three unknowledgeable

Impact Church of Christ

The Impact Church does not have a benevolence program. Rather, it is a church that ministers after the pattern of the gospel. Ministry to the poor is not something that they do -- it is who they are. While many churches have fled from the inner-city for the comfort of the bedroom communities, the Impact church has boldly decided to make its home in downtown Houston. It is here that they preach the gospel and baptize people. It is here that they feed hungry people and work for adequate housing. It is here that they model the Shalom of God as individuals with different ethnic origins, languages, and socio-economic status meet around common table.

Ron Sellers, Calvin Henry, and Charlie Middlebrook form the leadership backbone for this congregation. Henry, previously a missionary in Latin America, provides a valuable outreach into the Hispanic community. Doug Williams is beginning a much needed counseling ministry with the congregation. A Food and Clothing Distribution Center, and AA meetings are just a few of the ministries members are involved in. It is their task to preach Good News to the 10,000 homeless of Houston -- a city whose high school dropout rate is enormous.

The Impact Church is supported by several area congregations, most notably the Oak Ridge Church of Christ. Every Sunday an area church hosts a fellowship meal that follows the morning service. 75% of service attenders are visitors. Their story is exciting, holding out the promise that the gospel can change lives.

people before they find one who can listen, understand and offer appropriate solutions.

The egocentrism of childhood causes these children to believe that the chaos and unhappiness in their homes is their fault. Many times they are told this by their parents. Well-meaning friends, family members, and fellow Christians suggest that if the children or non-using spouse would behave differently their homelife would get better.

Children in families such as these grow up believing that no one cares about them. They worry a lot about the chemical use and the unsettling affect it has on their family. With their limited knowledge and narrow perceptions they often turn to God to rescue them. They often feel rejected and abandoned by God because of the circumstances at home. They endure the situation never experiencing the intervention they thought He would enact. Trust in God is destroyed. Helping these children find a trustworthy God in later life is a major task of recovery.

Recovery for the family is difficult. Family members have to come to the realization that their efforts to change the dependent parent are futile and may even be enabling the addictive behavior. What they can do, however, is begin their own recovery. In this way they initiate the healing of the family. The family can learn to stop focusing on the behavior of the chemically dependent person. They can learn how to take control of themselves as well as taking responsibility for what they can control— their behavior. These new behaviors instill hope and offer freedom from the continual cycle of the family disease of chemical dependency.

The children especially need to hear important messages. First, they need to hear that they are not alone. Second, they need to know that chemical dependency is a disease and that the addicted person needs help to stop using— it is not just a matter of will power. Next, they need to realize that the chemically dependent person is responsible for his/her own recovery and that the family members are responsible for theirs. In addition, they need the hope that comes in knowing that they can get help regardless of what the addicted parent does. They need to hear that the chemical dependency is not in any way their fault and that the problems that they perceive are real. They need to learn how to separate the person from the addiction. They need to learn that it is alright and beneficial to talk to others. Finally, they need to learn how to have fun— a thing that dependency deprives them of.

Rainbow Days, Inc., a program that I am involved with, is a non-profit agency based in Dallas which offers support groups for children, parents, and Adult Children of Alcoholics affected by the disease of alcoholism. The groups are conducted in a variety of community and school settings. One group meets in the church building where I attend. The groups are facilitated by leaders who are trained by Rainbow Days. The participants are allowed to express their feelings in a caring atmosphere. They are taught new coping skills and methods for breaking the vicious cycle of chemical dependency.

The church needs to minister to these families. They need to reveal God who brings order to chaos through His creative love. Few organizations exist that have recognized the effect of chemical dependency on families and children. Your church might be surprised in finding out the number of members of your church that are dealing with the family disease of chemical dependency. Rainbow Days and other organizations would be glad to share information on how to start a program like theirs.

-- A'Lynn Collins

Health Talents International: Medical Missions

As never before in history, Christians are confronted with a world of hunger and sickness, where lost and lonely people wander through what appears to be a meaningless existence. The mass media and low cost transportation have opened the far corners of the world to all of us, and if we stop to look we are increasingly brought face to face with that majority of the world's population who live in squalor, daily facing malnutrition and disease, drinking contaminated water, bearing children without joy, dying alone and hopeless on the street.

Sadly, many of us see the poor and diseased and close our eyes, the sight, and the magnitude of the task, are too overwhelming. There are others who feel that "the poor will always be with us," or even that these souls have somehow brought this suffering upon themselves. Fortunately, however, there are some who take seriously the example of the Christ who healed the body and the soul, and loved the whole person. Health Talents International patterns their work after this understanding of the person of Jesus.

Health Talents International (HTI) is an organization which is committed to Christian health promotion. Three broad goals define the mission of HTI: 1. To proclaim the Gospel of Christ by word and deed, ministering to the soul through evangelism and to the body by meeting physical needs; 2. To train indigenous people to lead indigenous churches and/or serve their own populations as Health Promoters; 3. To provide short term opportunities for U. S. Christian professionals to use their skills to train and minister to others in developing countries.

The world confronts us daily with the results of humanities rebellion from God. It seems that every year some large scale disaster strikes some part of the globe. Recent years have seen Ethiopia, Sudan, and Bangladesh in the headlines. Photos of bloated and dying children touch our hearts, and an outpouring of material aid is forthcoming. Sickness and death surround us and the mass media affords all too frequent opportunities to witness this life. Any preaching of the Gospel must take seriously the impact of sin in peoples' lives. The proclamation of Christ the Redeemer means that every aspect of our existence is subject to his redemption. Our task, therefore, is to be servants who express his redemption tangibly, by allowing God to use the talents that he has given us to heal the broken lives of the dying. We proclaim Jesus as Redeemer and Healer of shattered lives.

HTI is committed to ministry for the long

term, for dealing with problems that do not always make the headlines. This philosophy has guided our efforts to enter developing and depressed nations and to train local volunteers as health promoters. We provide villagers with extensive training in dealing with the health care problems involving rehydration, nutrition, alcoholism, family planning, maternal and child care and community health. Health Talents International is not equipped to quickly mobilize teams of relief workers to enter areas of famine, drought or flood. But HTI missionaries are living in the villages of Central America, working daily to train local volunteers to improve the conditions and lives of their neighbors. Wholeness of life, conceptualized by the Hebrew word "Shalom," is the objective.

The spiritual, emotional and physical demands of living in an alien culture, often without access to electricity or running water, are sometimes too much for even the most zealous Christian to cope with. It is important that Christians considering a future in medical missions be given some exposure and instruction to such work in a foreign environment. For this purpose HTI conducts the Medical Evangelism Training (MET) program. This training is held on site in a foreign country and is 5 weeks in duration, combining academic instruction with hands-on field experiences. Students reside with native families and receive training in local health problems, cultural anthropology, language acquisition, and medical evangelism. The MET gives Christians who are willing to serve in medical missions the opportunity to weigh their desire against abilities, and to make informed decisions as a result. In addition to MET, Health Talents arranges for Christian medical professionals from the U.S. to serve for one or two weeks helping full-time missionaries in a variety of ways, including conducting special needs clinics. These clinics provide Christian professionals the means to utilize their talents in a vital, and rewarding, way.

Since its inception in 1973 in Birmingham, Alabama, Health Talents International has been involved in projects in the Peten region of Guatemala and in the Central American country of Belize. Ongoing projects include a clinic in Guatemala City and a continuing presence in some of the villages of Belize. Additional projects in other countries, such as Mexico and Honduras, are in the planning stages. All of these works are designed to allow us to look into the eyes of Jesus in the faces of the suffering. This is the purpose of Health Talents International.

Anyone interested in more information about HTI can write to Marie Agee, 5199 Caldwell Mill Rd., Birmingham, AL, 35244.

--Homer Burks, Mike Cobb

Manna International: Hunger Relief

In the first half of the eighties, poverty and hunger finally made it to the big time: front page stories, segments on the evening news, Band Aid, USA for Africa ("We Are the World"), Hands Across America, and now, Farm Aid and Comic Relief. It became hip to care and much good was and still is, accomplished through the efforts of many. You just cannot argue with hunger as an issue; maybe that is why it was so popular. But unfortunately, popularity is fleeting and the "hunger thing" is no longer front page news.

This year the Berlin Wall wall has fallen with the incredible events in Eastern Europe. Pretty stiff competition for something so unglamorously constant. 40,000 children dead in each twenty-four hour period (more than 15 million a year). 500 million people chronically malnourished (one in eight persons world wide). Anywhere from 300,000 to 3 million homeless in America. The statistics could go on endlessly. To phrase it another way, "this hunger holocaust takes as many lives as would a Hiroshima-sized bomb dropped in the third world every two or three days." (Seeds, August 1988) Poverty with its resulting hunger and malnutrition is a constant. Much more constant than the attention it receives from the stars, the news, and the pews.

Manna International has been placing constant attention on hunger since its beginning in late 1983. Begun as the dream of the youth group in Redwood City, California, Manna has grown into a \$400,000-500,000 a year relief and development ministry of the Redwood City Church of Christ. Through the efforts of young people in churches of Christ across the country Manna is trying to keep the reality of hunger an ever present concern in our churches. George S. Johnson says it well,

No institution in our society is better equipped and organized to lead the way in ending worldwide hunger than the church. We find our mandate in the book we claim as our authority and inspiration. God's Word clearly states that we are to feed the hungry and correct the oppression that causes it.

(The Other Side, July/August 1988)

We are called to ministry among "the least of these." Not to necessarily succeed in feeding, helping, and sharing Christ with all people everywhere (although it is our goal) but at the very least being faithful to the call! Faithfulness, not success.

Manna's beginning is a great example of feeling the call to faithfulness. Redwood City's youth group, led by then youth minister Kevin McFarland (now the Director of Manna), became involved in ministry to the poor in the San Francisco area. Also, through World Vision, they immersed themselves in the hunger movement. These twelve young people caught God's heart for the needy and felt compelled to share it with others. Young people do not realize "it can't be done," so they shared a dream with Kevin about involving other church of Christ groups in their crusade to impact the world. Manna is this dream put into action. Incidentally, of these twelve young people at least half have been or are making plans to be, involved in missions.

In a word, the heart is what Manna is about. Our purpose is to help young people and adults develop hearts that are broken by the things that break the heart of God. Hearts that are so filled with the love song of Christ that they can not be kept quiet. Hearts saved through the grace of God which ask how can I share this good news with my world. Hearts leading our heads into the thoughtful process of changing the world through active engagement -- not just charity. Hearts that are faithful, informed, and responsive.

Specifically, Manna tries to involve as many youth groups across the country as possible in each year's Manna Project.* Each of the last two years' Manna Projects have been the largest efforts in history by teens on behalf of the needy.

Each year this project involves young people in a fund raising effort and a learning experience. For example, **Hands of Hope**, the 1986 Manna Project was a 30 hour fast and lock-in. Money was raised by the young people securing sponsors who pledged an amount for each hour of the fast. Participants also contributed approximately ten dollars to represent what they would have spent for food. During the 30 hours together, the youth were led through a variety of educational and simulation experiences, Bible studies, devotionals, and other activities. These are designed to inform both the heads and hearts of those involved.

The funds raised are presently being used in church of Christ based relief and development projects in Haiti, Ghana, Ethiopia, and El Salvador. Literally thousands of needy people have been touched by these efforts. Additionally, in each country jobs are created for local Christians who assist with the efforts.

What now? Manna is still dreaming and planning for action. The needs of our world are increasing. We must continue to realize that just as the masses die one at a time, they can be helped one at a time. The call will never be silent, the task never complete.

Some immediate goals are to involve youth groups in "hands on" opportunities for ministry to Jesus Christ as he is manifested in "the least of these." (Matthew 25:31-46) Short term mission trips to such

"close" third world countries as Haiti or Honduras will inexorably change our young people as their world view is dramatically widened.

Manna also needs to broaden our base of support and involvement. Manna has worked on the "trickle-up" theory by involving teens who then involve the "adult" church. The primary emphasis will continue to be youth, but more consistent and on going support is needed for adequate funding of the relief and development work. Hopefully, younger children's groups, college and singles' groups, and adults can have some level of involvement. This years major project is a day of prayer and fasting in which families will be encouraged to donate what they would have spent on meals during their fast.

Expansion of foreign relief and development efforts is another immediate goal. Honduras and Zambia are among the countries which are being considered. Present projects are also expandable. Domestic involvement is also a goal.

Primarily though, Manna is about faithfulness. We must not ignore God's clear call for involvement in the world. As he began his public ministry, Jesus said, "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, therefore he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." (Luke 4:18,19) This is our task, not to be "the people who don't...", but to be the people who take Jesus seriously enough to do what He calls us to do! The Truth is plain and, "in order for us to fully understand the biblical message about God's concern for the poor and oppressed, we need radical changes in our thinking and living. For many of us to move beyond charity, we need to be converted." (**The Other Side**, July/August 1988).

-Terry Cagle

For more information or questions about Manna International, contact:

Kevin McFarlen
Redwood City Church of Christ
Redwood City, California

Quotes from:

"Biblical Preaching Confronts World Hunger" by George S. Johnson, **The Other Side**, July/August 1988, pages 28 and 30.

"The Causes of Hunger" by Oxfam America, **Seeds**, August 1988, page 18.

Operation Blue Jeans

The Christian Service Center in Abilene has served the community's poor for 25 years. Their services include clothing, food, household items, and dental assistance. The University Church of Christ oversees the work, aided by thirteen other congregations in Abilene.

The highlight of their year comes every Summer as they begin to collect donations for Operation Blue Jeans. Last year the CSC provided blue jeans for 1,261 children. Each of these children received one brand new pair of top quality jeans and two second hand pair along with shirts, underclothing, and shoes. A Christian businessman in Nashville has helped secure jeans for as little as \$4.69 a pair. For information on CSC and Operation Blue Jeans contact Paul Garrett, 901 Mesquite, Abilene, TX, 79601, (915) 673-7531.

Central Dallas Food Pantry

This ministry is located in a donated office building in the middle of Dallas. Food and clothing is distributed to clients by volunteers from area churches who staff the pantry three days a week. Joe Roberts supervises the pantry which is looking to expand their open hours to five days a week. Charles Landreth, who also coordinates inner-city relief efforts and publishes a newsletter on the subject, is helping in the expansion plans. In addition to being open more often, Landreth is hopeful that a developing job bank will be successful. This ministry is under the oversight of the Preston Road Church of Christ. For information on the Central Dallas Food Pantry, call (214) 826-9535.

Crisis Pregnancy Counseling

Pro-Choice advocates often accuse Pro-Life advocates of lack of concern for women facing unwanted pregnancies. Crisis pregnancy centers offer a way to show care and concern not only for the unborn baby, but also for the mother who may be frightened and alone. It is another way that Christians can minister to "the Poor."

Susan is nineteen, single, a local university student planning a career and a family some day. She has had a brief disappointing relationship with a young man and is shaken and filled with fear. She feels her parents would be devastated if they find out. What will she do? Where can she get the help she needs?

Janet is sixteen, single, a local high school student. She also fears she may be pregnant. Like Susan, she cannot bear the prospect of telling her parents the truth. They will be disappointed in her, hurt, and probably angry. What will she do if she is pregnant? Where can she get the help she needs?

Maria is a twenty-four and married; her husband is out of work; they have one young child and are living in a crowded home with other family members. She cannot afford another child. What will she do if she is pregnant? Where can she get the help she needs?

Their stories are different, but their fears and needs are the same. Out of their need to know, Susan, Janet, and Maria (these are not their real names) came to the Pregnancy Counseling Service (PCS) in Abilene, Texas for a free pregnancy test. If the test results confirmed their suspicions and fears, each planned to get an abortion.

The PCS of Abilene is a locally supported and controlled, tax-exempt service organization. It is governed by a Board of Directors which is aided by an advisory council consisting of medical doctors, community leaders, and educators. The staff consists of two salaried counselors and several office volunteers.

The purpose of the PCS is to give help and information to women like Susan, Janet, and Maria facing possible crisis pregnancies. The goal is to help each pregnant client carry her baby to term. We do this by offering pregnancy tests, information on the developing baby, information on the effects of abortion on the baby and the mother, financial assistance for prenatal care, baby clothes, maternity clothes, and counseling. All these services are free of charge.

When a client first comes to the PCS, she fills out a complete personal and medical history. She is then tested for possible pregnancy. As the client waits for the results of her test, a counselor meets with her to discuss her situation. After ascertaining the

client's particular circumstances, fears, and needs, the counselor shares pertinent information in three general areas.

First, the counselor tells the client about the development of her baby. The PCS has pictures, slides, and models, showing in utero babies from four weeks to sixteen weeks in development. If the client is indeed pregnant, an attempt is made to find a visual depicting a fetus at the same stage as her baby.

The second body of information concerns abortion. The PCS has brochures, slides, and videos showing the results of abortion at different stages of fetal development. The types of abortion (suction, D&E, saline, prostaglandin, etc.) are discussed, along with the procedure used in each.

Finally the counselor makes sure the client understands the risk abortion poses to the mother's body. She is informed of possible infection, hemorrhage, blood clots, brain damage, perforation of the womb, and, in later life, tubal pregnancies, chronic miscarriage, premature births, or sterility. This information is often quite startling to the client, but it proves helpful to her as she considers her future.

Usually by the end of the counseling session the pregnancy tests are ready. When the results are revealed, the client has had personal attention from a counselor and received information which allows her to make informed decisions regarding the results she has been waiting to hear.

Susan's test was positive. She broke into tears when the counselor told her the result. She had no intention of ever seeing the father of the baby again, much less marrying. Her parents were faithful Christians, and she was deeply concerned about hurting them. She was confused and felt alone.

The counselor presented the option of adoption and told her about the agencies available to help. Susan decided to make a confidential adoption plan for her child. To her surprise, her parents were very supportive and reassuring during the entire pregnancy. She entered a Christian maternity home during the summer break; her university never knew of her pregnancy. After her child was born, she called her PCS counselor and said, "I just feel so happy for someone— she is such a beautiful baby."

Janet's pregnancy test was negative. She was extremely relieved. Her counselor then began one of the most important and effective aspects of our ministry. It is what we call chastity counseling. At this time young women with negative pregnancy tests like Janet's are encouraged to wait until marriage for further sexual activity.

Janet was grateful to have someone with whom to talk about her experience and her feelings. As she left, she hugged her counselor and said, "Thank you so much for talking to me about this. I expected a nurse who would just tell me the result, not someone who

would really talk to me.”

Maria’s test was positive. After seeing a slide presentation on abortion she was silent and withdrawn. Her financial burden was too great. Maria left abruptly before the counselor could finish telling her of the financial help available. . However, she called the next day to ask if someone would really help with some of her medical expenses.

Maria later visited the office and picked out several sacks of baby clothes and maternity clothes from our supply. She began a low-cost prenatal medical plan with our help. Since then her husband has found a job, they have moved into an apartment, and their second son has been born. After he was born, Maria brought him to our office. She beamed as she said, “I want to show you the result of your helping me!”

The PCS has been open in Abilene for five and one-half years. In that time we have seen 4,846 clients. About half of these clients came to us simply for a free pregnancy test or for help in carrying a pregnancy to

term. The other half came to us seeking abortion. Of these 2,400, more than half left our office saying they would not, could not abort their babies.

Hundreds of crisis pregnancy centers operate in the United States. We modeled the clinic in Abilene after Dr. Robert Pearson’s Problem Pregnancy Centers*. Two other organizations, The Christian Action Council and Abortion Alternatives*, offer detailed instructions for opening a crisis pregnancy center.

There are no easy answers for a woman facing an unwanted or unplanned pregnancy. But we have found that many women, when they realize that abortion literally means death for their preborn baby and are offered loving support and encouragement, will choose that most precious gift — life.

* For more information on beginning a crisis pregnancy center you can write the Pearson Institute, 3633 Lindell Blvd., Suite 290, St. Louis, MO 63108; or the Christian Action Council, 701 W. Broad Street, Suite 405, Falls Church, VA 22045.

-- Holly Allen

Christian mysticism finds that direct experience of God... has its place not outside, beside, or above responsibility for the world of our brothers and sisters, but in the center of it.

Johannes Metz
