

Board of Directors

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 Gerri Leach, Executive Director

In Loving Memory of.....

The following individuals made memorial donations to The Jail Chaplains in loving remembrance of.....

Lavern Lovaasen Given by Michael & Sharon Kratzke
 Chuck Maynard Given by Roy & Sharon Lemke

SAVE THE DATES

MAY 16 • LUNCHEON AT THE CASS COUNTY JAIL

If you are interested call Gerri for details and reserve a seat.

JUNE 13 • JAIL CHAPLAIN PICNIC, GOOSEBERRY PARK, 5-9 P.M.

Graduates will be hosting this event for their families, Jail Chaplains volunteers and donors.

OCTOBER 29

Dessert Social, Ramada Plaza Suites



I am in awe..... by Gerri Leach, Executive Director

In just a few days it will be a year since I had the privilege of joining the Jail Chaplains. To be an ‘inside witness’ of the amazing things the Lord is doing in and through this ministry is inspirational! Chaplain Mike, our board, team of volunteers and I are experiencing an expression of Ephesians 3:20, “Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us.”

THE FIRST QUARTER OF 2013

- 1,984 attended Jail Chaplain programs
- 100 requested a personal visit with Chaplain Mike
- 300+ volunteer hours were invested in sharing the Good News
- Praise the Lord for open hearts and workers to share Jesus!

CASS COUNTY JAIL ADMINISTRATION HAS REQUESTED TWO NEW PROGRAMS

- Food & nutrition
- Art (starting with a focus on drawing)
- Praise the Lord for more opportunities to invest in men & women!

\$20,927 INVESTED ON GIVING HEARTS DAY

- 126 total donors of which 74 had not given in 2012
- Sandy’s Donuts partnership w/ red velvet donut promotion (1,000 donuts sold out by 11 a.m.)
- Praise the Lord for each partner!

GOD ANSWERED A LONG TERM PRAYER FOR TRANSITIONAL HOUSING

- Project HOME was ‘birthed’ in February
- Three men currently have the opportunity for a home
- Expansion in site to provide for three additional
- Praise the Lord for everyone who invested time & treasure!

SAVE THE DATES!

Please pray for the Lord to continue to guide me, Chaplain Mike, our board and volunteer team. Also ask the Holy Spirit how He may be calling you to be a part of the Kingdom work He has planned for this ministry. Be blessed and thank you in advance for your partnership!



OUR MISSION

Provide inmates with spiritual guidance and support

Share the Gospel of Jesus Christ

Help bridge the gap between the inmate, their family and a local church

To assist and help in practical ways, to encourage and help our graduates in a positive spiritual journey with Jesus Christ.

The second chance that makes all the difference in life!

Broken to Assist Others in Their Re-entry.....Scott Nielsen

Has your life ever been so thoroughly disrupted and felt so entirely out of your control that you had difficulty focusing on even the simplest of tasks?

I’m Scott Nielsen and I was fortunate to grow up in Oakes, ND with Christian parents in a loving, church-going family. I accepted Jesus Christ as my Savior at age 12 at a Bible camp. I graduated from UND and married my beautiful wife, Jo. Our first child, Katie, went to be with the Lord at just three and a half months of age. God then gave us three beautiful children, Joshua, Christian and Sarah, who continue to bring tremendous joy and blessing to our lives.

I was fortunate to work with a great ND-based, family-owned bank with wonderfully supportive people throughout my career. I served as Human Resources Officer and joined the bank’s management team, leading to my family’s relocation to Bismarck in 2000. The company’s expansion into new markets and growth in staff to over 200 employees created great challenges, rewards, and opportunities in what became a highly demanding position. Throughout the years, I remained active in my church, serving as lay leader, teaching Sunday school, helping with youth group, and singing in choir.



Then came 2011, and with it, enormous change and upheaval. In April, my mother unexpectedly passed away following a four-month hospital stay and valiant comeback from kidney failure. In July, my 33-year banking career ended with an unanticipated retirement made necessary by my inability to continue to manage my job responsibilities in the midst of a crumbling marriage. In August, my last child moved away to attend college. In September, my 33-year marriage ended in divorce. In October, our Bismarck home sold and I relocated to Fargo.

In just a few months, nearly all the things I thought defined me had changed or been swept away. Suddenly, nothing was ‘normal’ in my life. I was a broken man, in a very deep and dark valley, crying out to God with so many questions.... Who am I? What do I do now? Where is my life headed? What is my value? Why did all these things happen? So many times I found myself drawn to Proverbs 3:5-6 and its command to trust Him with all my heart, not look to my own understanding, and acknowledge Him in all things, that He would make straight my path. No longer a husband, career man, or home owner, recovering from the loss of a parent, dealing with an empty nest, and finding myself in a new city where I knew few people, I felt a profound sense of loss of identity and purpose.

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Next came the painful process during which God revealed how I'd invested years trying to perform, please people, and find my identity and sense of value in my roles as a husband, father, banker, and active church member. In fact, I had neglected and drifted away from my Lord and Savior. Out of His great love for me, God blew down the 'house of cards' I had labored to build for myself on the weak and collapsing foundation of personal reputation, performance, and goodness. I regret not a single moment of the pain I've endured . . . my merciful and gracious God is renewing and transforming my life in Christ!

In Fargo I found Bethel Church, immediately plugging into their DivorceCare group through which the Lord greatly ministered to me and moved me forward on the path of healing, restoration and forgiveness. I got to know our DivorceCare facilitators, Paul Berthelsen and Elizabeth Williams, and they became aware of the abundance of time I had available as a retiree. I continued to pray for direction as to how I could best invest my time serving Jesus and others.

Elizabeth, who volunteers with the Jail Chaplains, invited me to a luncheon at the Cass County Jail on October 18, 2012. I felt a special connection with the brokenness I saw in each of the inmates who shared their story. They spoke of having attended the Jail Chaplains programs, hearing Jesus loves them and wants a personal relationship with them. They went on to tell how they had surrendered their lives to Jesus and were finding hope in Him!

Visiting with Chaplain Mike Sonju and Gerri Leach, Executive Director, I learned that men and women leaving the jail with a criminal record have a very difficult time finding employment. As we talked about this barrier to re-entry into the community, and the great challenges facing these individuals to provide for themselves and their families, I felt the Lord tug at my heart. Could Jesus be asking me to invest what I'd learned during my career as an HR manager into building relationships with local businesses who might give these men and women a second chance? Might part of my own healing involve helping others on a similar path to restoration and new life in Christ? What an amazing God we serve!

I am excited to be a Jail Chaplain volunteer who will serve as the Employment Coordinator for this ministry. Our goal is to develop a 'short list' of employers in the Fargo-Moorhead area who are open to hiring individuals referred through our ministry. If we can minimize the incidents of rejection that these men and women with records experience, we know it will be a great encouragement to them!

Chaplain Mike, Gerri and I have also discussed the possibility that I might provide assistance with resume writing and job interviewing skills. We trust the Lord's continuing guidance and direction as my volunteer position is further developed. Praise the Lord for the grace He extends to us and the call He places on His children to do the same for others through the power of the Holy Spirit.

If you have read my story and are in a position to influence employment opportunities I'd love to visit with you. I can be reached at scottnielsen53@gmail.com or at 701-552-3740.



WHAT IS PROJECT HOME?

Project HOME is a community effort focused on providing healthy re-entry opportunities, accountable housing, mentoring and employment assistance for men in recovery after leaving incarceration. My Father's House has leased a three-bedroom duplex located at 1316 3rd Avenue North in Fargo with space for future expansion next door.

IS PROJECT HOME A HALF-WAY HOUSE OR TREATMENT PROGRAM?

No, Project HOME is a permanent housing option. The men will pay rent and are asked to sign a minimum 6 month lease with an option to extend. The residents are required to be employed and are encouraged to live a healthy lifestyle with guidelines and expectations based on Biblical principles.

WHO IS ULTIMATELY RESPONSIBLE FOR PROJECT HOME?

My Father's House, a faith based non-profit based in Minneapolis, is responsible for both the finances and programming at Project HOME. They came to Fargo-Moorhead at the invitation of Jail Chaplains with a goal to engage local churches, businesses, organizations and individuals to live out Matthew 25: 35-45. The mission of our community, with My Father's House as the leader, is to be tireless in an effort to house, feed, clothe and employ those in recovery after leaving incarceration—establishing a recovery accountability community within the home. My Father's House uses a locally financed and managed model for the recovery accountability communities it helps to develop. The management team and finances for Fargo Moorhead are a work in progress. It has been amazing to see the Lord guiding this project each step

of the way. We continue to seek Him to reveal the leadership team in our community and to rise up the non-profit, which will ultimately manage the endeavor.

HOW DID JAIL CHAPLAINS AND MY FATHER'S HOUSE COME TO WORK TOGETHER ON PROJECT HOME?

Jail Chaplains board and staff have long been aware of how difficult, if not nearly impossible, it is for individuals leaving jail with a felony record to find housing in our community. Over the years there has been research and much prayer about how to address this unmet need. Late in 2012, Jail Chaplains gathered a team from across the community to look at how and where to begin. It was in this process the Lord connected us with My Father's House. We were so excited to learn they had already been involved in the start-up of twenty-five recovery accountability homes in fifteen Minnesota counties AND they had a goal to expand into North Dakota in 2013. The experience and established processes My Father's House brings to our community is invaluable. Our ministries coming together on Project HOME is no doubt a "God appointment"!

WHAT IS JAIL CHAPLAINS INVOLVEMENT WITH PROJECT HOME/MY FATHER'S HOUSE?

Jail Chaplains has been very involved in the start-up of Project HOME by serving as the primary communication hub for organizing the leadership team, as well as donations and volunteers involved in furnishing and preparing the home. Because of the 20+ hours of programming Jail Chaplains provides at the Cass County Jail each week, Chaplain Mike and a team of volunteers have developed relationships with the inmates, which permits our ministry to be the natural referral path for potential residents of Project HOME. The Jail Chaplains board and staff desire to be faithful to the ministry inside the Cass County Jail. At the same time we seek the Lord's desire for our involvement with the continued development of a recovery accountability community in Fargo-Moorhead. We believe that involves being strong advocates for My Father's House by continuing to raise the awareness of the responsibility we have as people of faith to walk with our brothers and sisters in Christ as they leave incarceration, by sharing in-kind ministry resources and by connecting My Father's House staff with leaders in Fargo Moorhead.

HOW WILL RESIDENTS FOR PROJECT HOME BE SELECTED?

Interested individuals will be asked to write their personal story, which will be submitted to the Screening Committee who will conduct interviews and select the residents. Chaplain Mike will serve on the Screening Committee along with several other volunteers from the community.

HOW IS PROJECT HOME FUNDED?

Through donations made directly to My Father's House- Fargo. PO Box 7406, Fargo, ND 58109

WHEN I MAKE A DONATION TO JAIL CHAPLAINS AM I ALSO GIVING TO PROJECT HOME?

As of this time the Jail Chaplain board has not set aside dollars in our budget designated to Project HOME. Our ministry has supported the start up with significant in-kind donations of leadership on the Project HOME committee, printing, administrative assistance, meals for volunteers and cleaning supplies.

Jail Chaplains has received some financial gifts designated for Project HOME. These dollars have been invested as directed. The board continues to prayerfully consider financial gifts in the future as the Fargo- Moorhead recovery accountability community develops.

