

TKJ Schematic

news & views for supporters and friends of



Not Quite Summer 2004

We are heading into the busiest season for ministry on the street. It seems that most people think about homeless people (if at all) in the winter, especially around Christmas. That is important and good to do so. What most people do not realize is that the busiest time for us is in the summer. Over at least the last five mayoral administrations in Philadelphia, there has been a funding game or dance that has played out each summer with the city shelters. Sometime in May or June, the city runs out of money for the shelters. They stop paying them their share of the per diem for the clients they serve. The shelters try to limp along. The first thing to go is meal service, for those that provide it. One by one they close. By August, only the few shelters with solid church or other charitable backing remain open. Sometime in September or October money from the next budget year is released to pay the shelters.

It is a good thing that this clumsy ballet happens during the warmer months, as it is not as hard to survive the nights on the street when there is no danger of frostbite. Even if this annual budget battle didn't occur, there would be more people on the street in the Summer because a certain percentage would rather avoid the institutionalized shelter system, if they can.

Whatever the reasons, the number of people looking for a meal on the street where we serve goes up dramatically in the warmer weather. Paradoxically, this is also the same season when many of our volunteers take vacations and miss a week or two or four. So we have fewer sandwiches and fewer hands to help serve more people.

Now, everyone needs a vacation or some sort of break from the routine. There is a sensible solution to the problem. After all, school is out in the summer. So, before you schedule every waking moment for your children, this summer, pencil in a couple of Thursday afternoons and evenings for The King's Jubilee. You and the kids can make sandwiches or goodie bags, assembly line fashion in the afternoon, then the whole family can join us in the city to give them away.

Maybe this Summer is the time to take the family to the "real world" not just Disney World.

The King's Jubilee Didn't Celebrate its 15th Anniversary

It occurred to me sometime in April that February marked 15 years since we started The King's Jubilee in 1989. I was reminded of this again last night. A couple of the men whom we serve were trying to recall how long I had been coming into center city to serve food. I think they were trying to make a point to some younger volunteers.

I guess I am disappointed that our services are still needed by homeless people. I know that Jesus said, "The poor you will have with you always." Poor, yes. Homeless, no.

We haven't always had a homeless underclass in this country. There is no good reason for us to accept this situation as normal. Since the congress has lacked the political will and the conservatives who control it are not as compassionate as advertised, we haven't raised the minimum wage to anything near a living wage. In the last few years, we are seeing a new phenomenon across this once great land. People who are working fulltime still cannot afford a place to live. We are still the only industrialized democracy to not provide universal health coverage. Our infant mortality rate ranks with those of third world countries.

Many of the homeless we serve have no hope of being able to rent or purchase any place for the foreseeable future, even working fulltime at what used to be decent jobs. Why? Because one visit to an emergency room slapped them with a five or ten thousand dollar bill, tied to their Social (in)Security number that ruins their credit rating.

Many of the people we serve are incredibly skilled and intelligent people. How many of us could find a way to get sleep and food, clean ourselves and our clothes, shave, all in the rather limited public spaces of the city? How many of us, after having done that, could find transportation to a job to work fulltime to make and pack salad for people who no longer remember how to peel a carrot? (It used to be that we were expected to provide housing for our domestic servants. Now that they work in a kitchen in a different county, we can let them sleep on the street.) How many of us after doing all of that could still be grateful and present a smiling face to receive some soup, sandwiches and iced tea served from a parkbench? This is what some of the men we serve do.

So I have had the privilege of serving some of these people for almost 20 years, over 15 with The King's Jubilee. I am still having fun. And what is especially nice now is that I have lots of help. I will tell you about some of them now.

Octagon Research Solutions

On one Thursday each month, the owner and employees at this small, medical research firm in Montgomery County take a long lunch and make hundreds of meat and cheese sandwiches for us to share in center city Philadelphia later that evening. They pack them in coolers with ice blocks and Nancy Smerkanich drops them off at St. Philip's for us to pick up on our way down to the city. They enjoy doing something hands-on and practical, together, to help those less fortunate.

Annunciation Greek Orthodox J.O.Y.

The Junior Orthodox Youth of Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church, Elkins Park, came up with a new spin on the power packs and made a couple of hundred bagged breakfasts for us to distribute in Philadelphia. I think this is the 5th time they have assisted us. And this is a creative way to meet a need. We give the people a breakfast bag that will keep for the next morning at the same time we serve them a hot dinner.

Thanks children!

Holy Ascension Antiochian Orthodox Mission

The McGraw family faithfully makes a large casserole or spaghetti and a few loaves of sandwiches each week and joins us on the street with them. Philip Riske has been a faithful soup-server with us. He and his family are moving to Chicagoland the first week in June. We will miss him riding shotgun in the van. He does it so peacefully. I never hear him wince when we get close to the rail on the Lincoln Drive, like some others. We wish all the best to you, Philip, Grace & Theophilus.

The McGraws will be hosting The King's Jubilee coffee hour at the mission on June 6th. They will serve food similar to what we serve on the street to raise awareness to the needs of homeless people

St. John Chrysostom

Albanian Orthodox Church

The ladies group at St. John Chrysostom Albanian Orthodox Church in Philadelphia has been making sandwiches regularly, once a month for us to share. They have also started gathering toiletries to give away. Last night, Tish Klus brought down over 100 power packs they made, along with the sandwiches.

St. Nicholas OCA Church

Father Joseph Toroney and Matushka Kathy have joined us to help serve on several occasions. One week, when our van was in the shop for repairs, he drove my route with me. It's always a joy to have them along

Former Co-Workers

The Meitzler family regularly makes a loaf of wonderful ham and cheese sandwiches each week. Jim used to work at the architects where Cranford used to work. They used to share rides to work. Jim came down with us for the first time, after about 5 years of faithfully making sandwiches. The people were glad to see who was responsible for "the loaf." They go to Huff's Church.

Rosanne Hayes works at Pennsburg Manor, where Bethann used to work. She makes sandwiches regularly and acts as a conduit for clothes and other items from St. Philip Neri RC Church in Pennsburg. The last few years she has hosted a cookie exchange at Christmas where everyone brings an extra dozen for The King's Jubilee to share on the street.

St. Philip Antiochian Orthodox Church

I am not sure who all is involved from St. Philip's, but at one point or another, it has been everyone. Next newsletter I will go into more detail.

Thank you all for your great generosity in Jesus' Name.

What We Do

The King's Jubilee serves soup, sandwiches, pasta with meat sauce, iced tea, fruit and goodies (if we have them) to between 50 and 150 men and a few women in Center City Philadelphia every Thursday night. This is in a park, year-round. We also share toiletries, blankets and season appropriate clothing with them.

We serve in the open air, because some of those we serve are paranoid and will not readily enter a place with which they are unfamiliar. Also, some of them are not homeless, but are on very low fixed incomes. They won't go to a soup kitchen to take from a program just for the homeless, but they feel free to eat with us to stretch their food budget, so they can stay off the street.

We also try to gather resources for other ministries that serve the poor in Jesus' Name. If we can't do it in Jesus' Name, we don't have the time or the desire to do it.

The Ad

"COME AND SEE" Icons, Books & Art was started with the hope that it would provide a steady income with flexible hours to facilitate my involvement in service with The King's Jubilee. After more than three years, it is starting to look like a viable business. The website has nearly 1,000 different icons on it. We have signed royalty agreements with more than a dozen iconographers of a variety of styles. The collection is growing all the time. We have shipped to all 50 states, and to twenty other countries on five continents. We average about 6,000 hits per day on the website. Please come and browse our collection at www.comeandseeicons.com

The Appeal

We can only do what we do, because there are many others who share the resources God has given them with us. Donations are gladly and gratefully received. In addition to checks and cash, personal size shampoos, soaps & lotions are always welcome, as well as men's clothing in season.

Checks can be mailed to:



216 W. Fourth St.
East Greenville, PA 18041-1629

Our phone is: 215-679-7563
email: TKJ@comeandseeicons.com

Thank you. May the Lord bless you as you bless the poor in Jesus' Name. Have a great Summer! Remember the sunscreen.
Peace,

Cranford Joseph Coulter