

Urban Christian Outreach (Ottawa)

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President's Message

Relational Work Works Among the Poor

“What’s on your ‘Life’s To-Do’ list?”

Have you seen this question in large block letters in a magazine advertisement?

We are a results-oriented society. We have “to do” lists, and develop personal programs that focus attention to guarantee maximum effectiveness for everything from daily work and home chores, to new year’s resolutions and financial goals. Many people even set performance goals for vacation.

To-do lists and structured programs make us highly efficient – perfect for a 21st Century, high-tech society bent on constant improvement, creative improvisation, and dynamic achievement.

But a scientific methodology that succeeds incredibly well helping us solve complex mathematical algorithms or launch satellites into low Earth orbit does *not* work when applied to human relationships. And especially, it completely fails when we try to apply its ‘truths’ to the poor.

When Jesus looked at crowds, he saw individuals. He was willing to change his program at any moment. (Remember when he was on the way to raise a little girl from the dead and a poor, sick woman touched his robe? He stopped, and only after changing her life did he continue. Luke 8: 40-49.) How different it is for us, and more specifically me.

When I look at a poor person on the street, often I see “The Poor” and want to accomplish something on a wide, significant, grand scale. But the immense task seems so large (as it is), that often the scale intimidates me into inaction. “What’s the use?,” I think to myself. “What can I do?”

Have you heard the story of the little boy standing on the seashore that was littered with thousands of beached starfish? The child reached down, picked up a starfish and tossed it far out into the ocean. Over and over again he repeated this process. Someone watching him finally walked over and said sympathetically, “It’s an impossible task isn’t it? You just can’t make any difference.”

In the midst of picking up yet another stranded starfish and flinging it into deep water, the little boy said, “I helped that one didn’t I?”

And that’s what Jesus showed us throughout his ministry. He didn’t solve “the poor” problem in his day, but he did improve singular lives one at a time. Jesus launched a revolution based on love, compassion, dignity and grace. Likewise, the heart of UCO’s work is relational.

UCO is Scripturally-based, and spiritually sound. It has changed many lives for the Kingdom of God and continues to do so. Please continue to partner with us. Your gifts and prayer support are vital for this work among the poor.

In His service,

Allen Macartney

President, UCO Board

Executive Director's Report

In the rush and urgency of your summer plans, I know you will take a moment to scan these pages and remind yourself of what your support means in the life of the poor. Throughout the Spring, our downtown work with individual people has involved:

- ***life-skills math***
- ***Bible discussions with practical life application***
- ***teaching how to write a short essay***
- ***mentoring in prayer and seeing answers to prayer***
- ***involvement in housing safety***
- ***conversations with young adults who choose to spend their summers couch-surfing and sleeping outdoors.***

Such are the challenges of Christian relational work, and we have learned to expect the unexpected!

Wealth has many faces. It is a delight to see Emma grow in poise and self-confidence in the midst of housing challenges that might break the average person. It is a privilege to share Gary's journey as he relishes the wealth that God is pouring into his life through Jesus Christ, in the midst of very simple living. *(Not their real names)*

On the hospital scene, the UCO/ROH class draws to the close of a strong academic year, as we have continued to work in partnership with ROH volunteers and occupational therapists on behalf of adults who live with mental illness. We serve approximately ten students each time we open our doors (twice a week). The students have a light in their eyes when they:

- ***succeed in writing a full page of prose for the first time in thirty years***
- ***read a book from cover to cover***
- ***achieve GED success***
- ***grasp a new math concept***
- ***successfully summarize a short newspaper article.***
- ***get ready to move on to other community education classrooms***

We've seen all of that, and more, this year. There is a good spirit in the classroom. And Nadia Behmann has given generously of her volunteer time and skills! On four occasions she has ably

taught the class for UCO when I needed to be elsewhere. Nadia also volunteers regularly with me in the classroom, and continues to represent UCO on a city-wide committee of instructors and mental health workers.

Also this Spring, I have preached on three occasions, spoken at a Christian street-level coffee house and participated in a cross-country colloquium on Criminalization and Mental Illness.

Please pray for the poor on our summer sidewalks, as I pray for you – our supporters – that you will truly be blessed and refreshed during these delightful weeks.

Gratefully and in Christ's service,

Katrine Barton-Coward
UCO Executive Director

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