

# Place of Promise

*A Multi-Service Advocacy Center*

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*"I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be my people." Leviticus 26:12*

April 2011

"The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives, and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion - to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of His splendor!"

Isaiah 61:1-3

Dear Friends,

There's nothing like springtime after the long, hard winter we just had! Somehow, the sunlight seems brighter and warmer. The little crocuses and tall daffodils splash a bit of color, capturing our eyes that have grown so accustomed to the cold, dark, grey of winter. The endless, frozen season that we have passed through has made the season of spring seem more spectacular than ever! Our hearts were bursting with gratitude to God when the temperature climbed above 60°.

There is a similar phenomenon that we experience here at Place of Promise all the time. Whatever is good, lovely, noble, and pure seems just that more awesome after being lost, alone, and suffering in the darkness. Grace seems so much more amazing when we've experienced the wretchedness in our souls. It brings such joy to see the pale green buds appear on the trees, the tiny flowers spring up from the soil and the robins return from their journey. None of these even comes close, however, to the wonder of seeing one who was lost be found; one who was in the darkest, deepest pit be lifted up by God and placed firmly on that solid Rock we call Jesus!

There were several times this past winter when I wondered were the roses going to survive? Would the roof hold up? Would any of us brave the storms of winter holding on to the hope of better days? How about the one who has never experienced a springtime? How hard it is to hope for what we cannot see even in our minds' and hearts' warm memories? We once had a resident who came from Uganda to Massachusetts in February. She became severely depressed, almost to the point of despair, because she believed our world would remain as cold, dark, and lifeless as it appeared to her right then. You can just imagine her great joy, her delight, her wonder when the trees and flowers began to bud and bloom! So life is for many who come to Place of Promise. They have never lived in the Presence of God's light and love. They have only the hope they can capture from the eyes of another who has come out of their graveyard filled with death and destruction into life in abundance! More and more of the people I interview to come to Place of Promise have never seen a "springtime" in their lives. They are in prisons, hospitals, shelters, detoxes and some are just in the street like discarded debris. Their lives are like our winter and most seem almost surprised to have survived. I interviewed a man in prison who almost seemed to have died in there. The prison guards, the nurses, the captain that called and asked me to come had never seen him smile. He barely talked and seemed almost suffocated by the heavy blanket of sorrow weighting him down. He was about to be released and had nowhere to go. What do you do when you don't know what to do? Call Beth at Place of Promise. Why? God is the source of life at Place of Promise. He is hope for the helpless. He is the way for those who are lost and He is Love! That love can bring forth a "springtime" from the most barren cold "winter". I went into the prison, into a little blank room, just the two of us, and God's Presence was right there with us. We talked and he caught the hope of a "springtime" he'd never experienced. When we walked out of the room, he was smiling! Everyone cheered. Today, the fruit of the

Spirit is beginning to be evident in this man. He's been at Place of Promise, clean and sober, part of our family for 6 months now. God has used all of you, everyone who gives, everyone who prays, everyone who volunteers, to love on this man and he is coming alive! Praise God! We can rejoice together and we can share that hope of new life with the next and the next who come through our doors.

I interviewed another man in prison this week who never saw the "springtime". When he was 17, his mother died and his father committed suicide two weeks later. Both parents were heroin addicts. The state took custody of the boy and put him in a mental hospital. While there, he met a girl who became his wife and they had a daughter. Two years later his wife and daughter were killed in a car accident. He found relief from the cold, dark pain and loneliness in heroin. He hated God. He blamed God. As I listened to the tragic story of this boy's life that had hardened him against any more hurt, I barely knew what to say. But God – ah, but God was there! Empowered by His Spirit, I leaned over closer to the young man and said, "If you come to Place of Promise, you will discover that God knows how bad you hurt, how much you hate, and more importantly, how very much you need His Love. I am here because God loves you so very much! Out of all the men in this prison and all the prisons in this state, He sent me to you to invite you into His family of love and life at Place of Promise. He wants you to know how much he loves you!" This big, young man, dressed in his orange prison jumpsuit began to sob. His shoulders shook. He lifted his head, stuck out his hand to shake mine, and said, "No one ever picked me. Tell God thank you." He's coming to Place of Promise next week; his very first "springtime". Thank you, Jesus, for new life! My deepest gratitude to every one of you who makes it possible to offer new life, new hope, no greater love; a family of God at Place of Promise! Together with God we have and give Hope!

When someone comes out of such a "winter" and has never experienced the "springtime", it's really important for them to see the new life demonstrated in others around them. Two of our residents, who are now living in our men's sober house, are living lives today that no one could have imagined was possible a couple years ago. One was so full of fear, he couldn't speak. He too, never smiled. He seemed to barely exist from day to day. He was all alone with very little hope. He had no self-confidence, and his self-esteem was very low. The other was completely lost and alone. He wanted to die. No one loved him. No one wanted him. Drugs and alcohol could no longer fill the emptiness or take away the pain. They were both trapped in a hard, cold "winter" of life. Today, no one would recognize either one as the same walking dead they were before. Today, they are both filled with hope. Both have so much of God's love in their lives and have gained the love and trust of their families. Today, they serve God by helping transport residents to appointments and church almost every day and they do it all so cheerfully! A couple of weeks ago, they started going to a prayer meeting at a local church with a new pastor. At their third visit, the pastor held them up as examples of real men of God who prayed and truly lived their faith consistently! What a tribute to them! More importantly, what Glory to God who rescued them from the dark, cold, deadened "winter" and has brought them into the light and new life of the "spring"! Thanks be to God for Place of Promise where they have learned to know Jesus as their risen Lord and Savior and where they have found new life! Pray for them as they continue to press on towards the heavenly prize for which God has called them. Pray that they can be a beacon of Hope for every new resident that comes through these doors. It may be "winter", but "springtime" is coming!

My hope and prayer is that you can experience the joy of being an integral part of Place of Promise. Each one of you, every one of us are vital members of this Body of Christ called Place of Promise. You are making a difference! You are helping, together with God and all of Place of Promise, to create a brand new "springtime" in the lives of so many. May God bless you and make His face to shine upon you. Rejoice! New life is here!

With Faith, Hope, and Love,



Beth Kidd, Director