

Place of Promise

A Multi-Service Advocacy Center

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

February 2011

"When I think of all this, I fall to my knees and pray to the Father, the Creator of everything in heaven and on earth. I pray that from His glorious, unlimited resources He will empower you with inner strength through His Spirit. Then Christ will make His home in your hearts as you trust in Him... may you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God."

Ephesians 3:14-17, 19

Dear Friends,

The City of Boston has gotten 61" of snow in 30 days and temperatures have remained frigid. There is snow everywhere! Three of our Place of Promise homes are corner properties, so shoveling has consumed great amounts of time. The biggest problem has become a question of where to put it all. We have a neighbor that likes to shovel all his snow right in front of our house. The huge mounds of snow make driving and walking unsafe for everyone.

If there are any redeeming factors from all this snow, they are the many spiritual lessons we can learn. I've noticed this month that a big issue for new residents at Place of Promise is where to put all their guilt and shame when they get sober and begin to heal. Some seem to occupy and exhaust themselves moving it around from place to place. Some keep it all deep down inside their souls and complain constantly about their many minor physical ailments. Others pile their guilt on someone else from their past or even from their community at Place of Promise. "You made me lose my temper." "She made me so upset, I couldn't help it." "If only my mother would have..." The blaming goes on and on. Then there are those who try to rationalize, justify, and/or minimize the sin that has paralyzed their lives like the blizzard in the city. When the snow hit Boston and Lowell, schools shut down, busses stopped running, power lines fell, cars crashed; the dysfunction was massive. So, too, are the effects of repeated, unrepented sin. Often, before someone comes to Place of Promise, they have existed under mounds of sin of their own and others and the resulting consequences for years. They have been in a cold, dark, and dangerous place for so very long. Coming into the warmth, light, safety and love of Place of Promise is sometimes a bit overwhelming. It can be more frightening than being trapped in the darkness.

It has continued to snow and snow and we've shoveled it into giant mountains all around us. Those snow mountains sit there day after day and grow harder and harder. After that process goes on for a while, any attempts to move them seem utterly impossible. Anyone would be a fool to try.

Some residents come to Place of Promise because the courts and/or departments of correction mandate residential treatment while on probation and/or parole. Do they come believing they can change; begin a whole new life? The truth is most come because Place of Promise beats prison. Can they deal with all their problems? They think not! Little by little, they may chip away at their mountainous issues which, for the most part, have been there since childhood. They believe they'd be total fools to believe they could change and become new creations in Christ. The Bible says all we

need is faith the size of a mustard seed and we can say to our mountains, "Be gone," and they will move! It's just so very hard to believe! There were many days this past month when it snowed all night and into the morning hours. It would almost seem pointless to try to accomplish anything that day when all that was visible was snow. Most residents come to Place of Promise after years of living in the "night". Drugs, alcohol, and mental illness blind them, numb them, and deceive them. They don't even realize all they have lost, the emotions that have piled up, or what a total mess their lives have become until they walk into the Light present in Place of Promise. Suddenly, the shame, guilt, fear, anxiety, loneliness, depression, self-hatred is in their face and they long to run back into the darkness that hides it all for a moment. Just as an overnight blizzard makes it almost impossible to get to work, so, too, it is hard to get to work on change, recovery, and a new life. It can feel too risky to even try.

My final analogy pictures the negative thoughts and behaviors that seem to rise within us and interact between us when life becomes so difficult, exhausting and almost never ending. Have you experienced the anger and frustration that wells up inside (and is not easily contained) when you've shoveled snow for an hour, clearing a pathway to the sidewalk and driveway and the plow comes along and, in a minute's time, undoes everything you just did? Or how about driving down a narrow, snow covered street and someone else gets stuck in front and behind, rendering you powerless to go on? Sometimes, such is life for a resident at Place of Promise. Everyone is broken, in bondage, hurt, and unhealthy. Even though Place of Promise feels safe and secure most of the time, there are moments when it seems that all the work you've done on yourself can be undone by someone else so quickly. Someone else's struggles, fears, failures impact everyone else's recovery, work, and new life. It's so easy to find yourself irritated, resentful, jealous, and completely distracted by the very people who we need for support and encouragement.

So what do we do with all this? We fall to our knees, confessing how completely powerless and unmanageable our lives have become. We identify and acknowledge all the sin that has built up through the many storms in our lives. We beg, we plead for that power greater than anything else we've ever known to come into our weak and weary lives and take over completely. We surrender to Jesus Christ who we have come to believe can remove all our sin as far as the east is from the west. We are filled with the most powerful Holy Spirit who strengthens us, guides us, and transforms us into the likeness of Jesus. Where once we were paralyzed, buried in the snows of our human natures, the front end loader/dump truck of God has set us free and given us hope for a brand new life!!

Please pray for us! This has been a cold, snow filled, and exhausting month. Pray that we endure; pray that we learn to run this race set before us at Place of Promise. We thank God for your gifts that make this place a reality in our lives. People are finding a new life here! They are coming to believe! They are learning to walk with God on this journey and we are so very grateful for every one of you who walks with us through prayer, financial gifts, and volunteer service! May we all live abundantly in the power of His love!

In Christ's Love,



Beth Kidd, Director