

COMMUNITY CARE FELLOWSHIP – A BRIEF HISTORY

Community Care Fellowship dates its beginning from 1981, when Rev. James A. “Rock” Hardaway, associate pastor of McKendree United Methodist Church, brought together a group of persons to provide outreach ministry to the rapidly increasing number of homeless people who made their way to the doors of that downtown Nashville church asking for assistance of various kinds.

For many years, McKendree UMC had held a noontime service on Thursdays to serve the spiritual needs of downtown workers. This was followed by a reasonably priced lunch, which enabled those who attended services to return to their workplaces within the hour. Through the years, one or two persons would occasionally come to the service and ask for a free meal. The request was normally answered by one of the business persons paying the price of the meal. But in the summer of 1981, there was such a rapid increase in the number of needy persons that those attending the services were unable to provide all that was requested.

Brother Rock asked Ken Powers, a member of McKendree who served on the church’s Social Concerns Committee (now called the Work Area on Church and Society), to assist him in developing an organized approach to this need. A problem of great concern was how to continue timely service to those who had to return to work, and yet accommodate the increasing number of needy guests in such a way as to not further injure their dignity. It was decided that Mr. Powers would act as host for the guests, and would spend some time in conversation with them between the worship service and the meal. This would accomplish two important purposes allow those who had to return to work to follow their normal routine and provide an opportunity for the church to become personally acquainted with those in need and to treat them with dignity in the service of the meal.

When the increase in need first became apparent, there were from 8 to 12 persons in the group. By September, the group averaged 20 persons each Thursday; by Thanksgiving the average was 45; and in the spring of 1982, the average peaked at about 90 persons, limited only by space available to accommodate them. In the meantime, Brother Rock and Brother Ken had begun meeting with the guests in a “rap session” during the hour preceding the worship service, and learning much about this new phenomenon of homelessness that was gripping the country.

Recognizing that McKendree UMC did not have facilities to meet these needs, Brother Ken and Brother Rock began to look for other ways to create such a ministry in some other location as an outreach of the church. It soon became apparent that no single congregation could reasonably underwrite such a ministry. During this time Bro. Ken was feeling a strong call to serve the homeless fulltime. Bro. Rock suggested that he should be on the staff of United Methodist Urban Ministries since the mission of UMUM was to serve the whole area on behalf of all the United Methodist Churches. Bro. Ken began to work with the homeless by just being out on the street to engage them there.

One of the greatest needs was facilities for personal hygiene, a place to use the restroom, take a shower, wash clothes, and store personal belongings that were not needed immediately at hand. Also, there was a need for a place for infants and toddlers to be taken care of and to be allowed to play on the floor, as the number of families among the homeless grew rapidly.

It was not long before Bro. Ken found that there had to be a place where these services could be provided. A storefront building on Fourth Avenue South, a half block off Broadway, was available and Rev. Billy Craighead, Mr. Lee Ellis and Bro Ken pledged to underwrite the lease if the funds could not be raised. Plans were made to organize under the auspices of United Methodist Urban Ministries of the Nashville District and to broaden the support base to include the entire district. The lease was signed in early May of 1984 and the renovation of the building was begun. Throughout this time, Brother Rock had been suffering from cancer, and he died on May 17, 1984, only days after the building for the new ministry had been leased.

Community Care Fellowship, as the new ministry was named, opened on September 5, 1984; with three showers, one washing machine and one dryer, two small restrooms, a “baby room” equipped with cribs and other childcare items, a storage loft, a small soup kitchen and dining area, an assembly area with seating for about 60 persons, and a small prayer room known as “Bro. Rock Chapel.” It was the first drop-in center and personal hygiene station for the homeless in Nashville. Community Care Fellowship, the official name, soon became known as Ken & Carol’s Place, which is the way it is still known on the street today.

At the end of the three year lease the additional three year option was not exercised. At that point big decisions had to be made. The redevelopment of Lower Broad was picking up steam. The homeless were being strongly encouraged to leave downtown and property owners were anticipating higher rents for their property. After looking for another location close to downtown without success an offer by an individual, who served on the Coalition For The Homeless with Bro. Ken, to match a fund raising effort to build a building was begun.

A suitable location became the next question that had to be faced. Rev. Marion McBay, Pastor at Nancy Webb Kelly, along with Bill and Jennette Underwood, members at the church, had been volunteering on Fourth Ave. and they offered to have the building built on their property. Temporary offices were established in Nancy Webb Kelly United Methodist Church, adjacent to the site of the new building. From this location, CCF continued to work as an advocate for the poor and homeless, and to distribute personal hygiene items from a mobile unit, while the building was under construction. Construction was begun in July 1988 and completed in January 1989, with the new facility opening for public business on January 9, 1989. In 1988 Bro. Ken had been appointed as Pastor of Nancy Webb Kelly UMC and so the gradual integration of the mission of the two began. The “Partners In Mission” relationship between Belle Meade UMC and Nancy Webb Kelly UMC added an additional avenue of ministry. The cost of construction, including furnishings and other miscellaneous needs, was approximately \$243,000, of which all but \$36,000 was paid in cash. A non-interest-bearing loan of the \$36,000 was made available by a generous supporter who made an outright cash gift of a somewhat larger amount.

On March 5, 1989 a Service Of Consecration was held and the Community Care Fellowship Ministry consecrated the “Brother ‘Rock’ Hardaway Fellowship Building.”

During the next three years the mission of both Community Care Fellowship and Nancy Webb Kelly evolved into a more unified effort. During this time the addition of Larry Prisco to the staff brought more experience of working with homelessness to the ministry. It also helped with the transition as Ken and Carol prepared to retire in 1992.

In 1994 Larry had an opportunity to make a career change. He, like Ken, had been working with the homeless since the early 1980’s. In June of 1994, Rev. Russell Lindsey was appointed as Director of CCF and Pastor to NWK. In June of 1995, Rev. Shirley Majors Jones was named to fill that appointment. Since that time she has continued tireless leadership to the constant changing opportunities of the ministry. The church has grown continually since that time and now includes community residents and members of the homeless community.

After many years of trying to prepare meals for a growing need in the small kitchen, plans were made to renovate the whole area. Under the leadership of Mrs. Pat Charron, President of the Board, a grant from the Cal Turner Family Foundation of \$100,000.00 was obtained which enabled the project to be completed by Vernon M. Williams Construction Company. The dedication of renovated facility was held in June of 2000.

During 1999 and the early part of 2000 the Board of Directors of United Methodist Urban Ministries were engaged in an effort to make a transition in its program and structure which would transfer some of its functions to the Annual Conference Staff and establish Community Care Fellowship as an independent agency. This was accomplished by continuing to function under the corporate charter of the Bi-District Board of Urban Ministry and do business as Community Care Fellowship.

This action was finalized in January of 2001. Soon after this Don Williams was asked by the newly constituted Board of Directors to help in the development of a strategic plan that would carry the changing ministry into the future. An evaluation of the facilities (then twelve years old) and an analysis of programs and services was undertaken. The conclusions were that more shower and laundry facilities were needed. More space for meeting rooms were needed for additional program offerings. The growth in the church membership made it essential to have more facilities. Another grant from the Turner Foundation enabled the Board to secure the services of R Chris McGill & Associates (Ed Atkisson, one of the associates, drew the original plans as well as the plans for the kitchen renovation and the current plans) architect to develop plans for the additions and renovation that would be needed to carry out the plans.

Don Williams accepted leadership in implementing the dream. He worked very hard with a number of contractors to get the best possible price on the proposed design. Using Hickman & Taylor and the sub-contractors listed in this program a guaranteed contract of \$703,787.00 under which a number of added improvements were done. New commercial washers and dryers were purchased at a cost of \$17,000.00. Work order changes and paving of the parking lot added \$27,673.00 to the original contract. New chairs to replace the pews in the church sanctuary were purchased at a cost of \$7,425.00. The result is a beautiful and functional facility which will serve well into the future.

In 2004, Rev. Pat Freudenthal was appointed as Program Director at CCF. In January, 2008, she was appointed to fill the position of Executive Director of CCF and pastor of NWK, following Rev. Shirley Majors-Jones' thirteen years of service in that position.

In 2009, the Board of Directors engaged the services of Higginbotham and Drescher as consultants to work with the Board on four areas: strategic planning, board development, marketing and fundraising. Through these efforts, a strategic plan was developed – the first official document of its kind for CCF. A new plan for Board recruitment and development was started and the fundraising efforts became more organized and focused.

As an outgrowth of this time of study and work on the infrastructure of CCF, much has been accomplished. The 2010 fundraiser efforts raised approximately \$111,000 for the ministry, which is one of the most successful fundraising efforts for CCF outside of a capital campaign. Many improvements to the physical plant were made because of these efforts – new light fixtures in the dining room, kitchen and laundry area, new ice maker, new double wide refrigerators, and a new phone system to name a few. The enthusiasm, excitement and new friends formed by these campaigns cannot be measured and are priceless to the ministry.

Just compare the original facility described earlier in the first building: then one washer and one dryer, now two commercial washers with a combined sixty pound capacity and three commercial dryers with a ninety pound capacity; then three showers, now five including one wheelchair accessible; then a closet size area with a stove and refrigerator, now a large kitchen area with commercial equipment. Bro. Rock and Bro. Ken must feel very happy as they survey the ministry to which they gave so much of themselves.