



Please pray for the following initiatives, activities and concerns of the National Service Committee:

- ◆ That the gift of healing will flourish in the Church, drawing many people toward the mercy and love of God. And for many parishes to undertake weekly healing prayer ministry to their parishioners.
- ◆ That the fruits of the Pentecost Vigil gathering in Rome will be evident in unity among all the Lay Ecclesial Movements and in zeal among their members.
- ◆ For the preparations for the National Leaders Conference to be held in Albuquerque in November and for many people to be able to attend.
- ◆ For the NSC as they meet for their annual retreat in September, that they will clearly discern the Lord's direction for the coming year.
- ◆ For an increase in faith, hope and love as we exercise all the charisms that the Holy Spirit chooses to bestow on us.

### Extra copies of *Pentecost Today* available

Extra copies of the last 6 issues of *Pentecost Today* (going back to January/February/March 2005) are available for distribution to members of prayer groups or at Days of Renewal for a nominal charge of \$5 per 10 copies. Please send your request (including issue wanted) to Chariscenter USA, PO Box 628, Locust Grove, VA 22508. Requests will be filled on a first come first served basis.

### Check out our website [www.nsc-chariscenter.org](http://www.nsc-chariscenter.org)!

Recent additions: a listing of 2006 Regional and Diocesan Conferences with dates and contact information; an annotated list of audio/cd resources from the Leaders' Conferences in Nashville and Chicago.

## Ways to provide healing prayer ministry at our prayer meetings

by Michele Greischar

One sunny afternoon in downtown Chicago, Petra and Jon were going to their prayer group for a meeting. To get there, they had to pass the corner of State and Chicago, a spot notorious for panhandlers and aggressive beggars. As they approached, one of the "regulars" reached out to them with his cup. "How about some money, huh?"

Most people's response was to avoid eye contact and to walk quickly past him. But Jon and Petra looked at each other and then at him. Somehow, this situation seemed familiar (Acts: 3:1-10). They didn't really have the money, but what did they have?

### What would you do?

Jon asked the panhandler his name, reached out to him and invited him to join them inside for some hot coffee and conversation. The veil of anonymity ripped.

As the trio walked into their meeting space, Mike, stationed at the door, greeted them warmly and welcomed them for the prayer meeting. He was a big guy, but he seemed gentle. Jon and Petra then introduced Bart, the beggar, to Mary and Beth, two members who were making coffee and tending to hospitality. The coffee was hot and satisfying. Beth even found a few cookies for their guest. Jon talked to him for a while and asked if he would like to stay for their meeting. "The coffee's not so bad. I'll hang around for a while," he responded. And he did.

Were Jon, Petra, Mike, Mary and Beth all part of the community's healing ministry?

As they sat down together, Jon told Bart that he would stay with him to answer any questions he had and to explain anything that he didn't understand. Some of the other people in the room wandered over and talked to them.

This was very strange. People were not ignoring him or running away from him. Even big Mike had welcomed him, not sent him away.

Bart noticed that some people were working together setting up chairs; some were getting sheet music and instruments ready. Others sat quietly talking together or laughing. There was an air of expectation, but Petra had disappeared. He asked Jon where she was.

Apparently, Petra and Faith were in another room praying **soaking prayer**. What a wonderful name – soaking, like in a bathtub. Images of warm sudsy water covering his body popped into his mind. Jon said that before each meeting a team was available for anyone who had chronic physical or emotional needs. He said that healing could happen instantly or in stages, and for those who needed repeated prayer for their needs, they could go there and get soaked. The group had also realized that some people came to the meeting with so much agitation that they needed a little time of concentrated prayer before the meetings began. They



were welcome to receive the infilling of God's grace and peace so that they could more fully enter into praise and worship. Jon explained that it wasn't the same as their individual prayer after the meeting, that oftentimes there were no words, just bringing the person into God's heart to soak in his love. That team was committed to 30 minutes before the meeting's starting time.

As more and more people gathered, Bart noticed Petra return to the room. Soon the seats were almost filled and Mike, the greeter, stood to welcome all and to begin the meeting with a peppy song about an "Awesome God." Obviously, these people really liked their God. They smiled and clapped as they sang and they even made some hand gestures with it. These were not the gestures he was used to seeing. Even though Bart didn't know most of the music, it was great to see the smiling faces and to hear the beauty of the others' voices. He felt really different, in a good way.

**Being in the presence of a loving God-centered community heals. The walls of isolation wobbled.**

As the music, prayers and scripture readings progressed, some people also gave short stories about their lives—ways in which they had seen God working and personal pains in which they knew God was present. Bart noticed that when people revealed these events in their lives, they were respected. No one was left with their raw wound untended; Mike would always say a short prayer for them. And then the group would continue. It seemed this all fit together as a whole. People's little stories did not distract anyone from what

seemed to be a growing sense of the presence and love of God in the group.

There were times of singing, times of scripture, times of reflection and times of sharing. Bart could feel a joy inside him that was quite unusual. Then they all stood and began praying for other people and situations. These people knew what was going on in the world and they asked their God for help. Some prayed for friends and relatives. Suddenly, he thought of his brother. They hadn't seen one another in four years. Bart silently prayed for him, too. He would talk to Jon more about this later. After another great song, the meeting ended. He hadn't felt this good in a long time—in fact he couldn't remember when he had felt so free and happy. He realized he was smiling, big-time and he couldn't seem to stop.

#### Had Bart experienced healing?

During the break, people came and introduced themselves to him. They asked where he lived and made normal conversation with him. It had been a long time since he had been treated in this way.

After giving Bart some more coffee and a few cookies, Jon explained that in a short while there would be some teaching about the prayer meeting and there would also be Prayer Room Ministry. He was welcome to go to either place if he wanted. Jon said that everyone needs healing prayer. And there are times when we all need prayer for sickness in our bodies or in our families. We all go through times in our lives that are trying and painful. That prayer space was quiet, private and confidential. Jon said that the people who

prayed there were well trained and compassionate. They were to act like the friends in scripture who carried the paralytic to Jesus for healing (Mark 2:1-12). Jon said that each healing not only helps us, but it also strengthens the faith of the community and it gives glory to God. He pointed out the two people who would be praying in the room that night, Paula and Tim. They looked okay. Maybe he would try it. Bart felt like he was seeing the world with new eyes now. Who knows what would happen next?

**Filled with God's love, our healing ministry in prayer groups begins before we ever enter our meetings. It includes our manner of driving there, whether filled with peace or with road rage. It includes those we encounter on our way there (and any expletives either said aloud or thought). And it continues with the atmosphere we create in our sacred and in our interpersonal interactions as we meet other members of our group. Do we indeed embrace one another as temples of Jesus Christ, our Living Savior, or do we ignore those we don't like and only talk to those who agree with us? (Matt 5:46-47).**

**Healing is not just an act or a ministry. It is a way of life. Jesus says to each of us, just as he said to the rich young man, "Come, follow me." (Mark 10:21). Are we willing to leave behind all that has been, and to freely follow Jesus in his walk of compassion and mercy? ♦**

*Dr. Michele Greischar has been a psychotherapist in Chicago for the past 30 years.*



*A past member of the National Service Committee, she now serves on the National Council. She and her husband Richard have three adult children.*