

Dear Friends of Bethany Ministries,

The Adventure continues, and God is still a surprise.

On December first, God provided another story to remind us who called us to begin this ministry and who sustains it.

It was a raw and windy night, and Celeste, one of our regular guests, wanted some hot chocolate.

Peter offered to go to the Grand Union to get some and Celeste began to prepare supper.

As he returned from the short drive, he had a powerful urge, almost a compulsion, to rearrange the cars in the driveway right away so he could drive Celeste to the bus early the next morning.

He pulled Anna from her new laptop computer to help him move the two cars. As she pulled in, she moved unusually close to the porch, but Peter left a full car length between his car and hers.

She even remarked, "What's the matter, is your car allergic to mine?"

About twenty minutes later, as we were eating supper, there was a very loud crash, and the house shook.

When we looked out the window to see what had happened, we saw that a tree had fallen in the driveway, knocking down the phone and cable lines, and landing between the two cars, barely grazing the tail of Peter's, without damaging the tail light itself.

Robbie, Peter's landlord, was assessing the damage within minutes, and shaking his head at yet another

---

*From Jerry Marten*

Hi Everybody,

My name is Jerry Marten, and my journey to Bethany Ministries has been long, kind of odd, and interesting.

I was born in Brooklyn 60 years ago, was raised there and did not move until the age of 31. At the time I was a Police Officer in New York City, and, after more than 21 years of service, retired in the Fall of 1987.

By 1994, we no longer had a need for a five-bedroom house, so we decided it was time to relocate.

We had been led years before to beautiful Schoharie

close call, like the flood of 1996 which came within one inch of coming in the door of the house.

He called the phone company, and the phone line was fixed within an hour.

By the end of the week, Mr. Becker, the neighbor from whose land the tree had fallen, had cleaned up the driveway and offered to plow it when it snowed.

This experience once more reminded us to listen to our hearts and even our stomachs, because God can use even hot chocolate to get our attention.

We were reminded of what we had known from the beginning of Bethany Ministries, The Lord is watching over us, but God is reminding us that The Spirit is still in charge.

Since July, Bethany Ministries has made a formal request to be included in the Official Catholic Directory for the U.S.

Soon we will begin the process of incorporation as a non-profit, with the help of a lawyer who has offered to donate his services (praise God!).

I have had some medical problems, which came to light when I had a physical in August, but had been draining my energy since May.

The conclusion to this process was surgery for hemorrhoids on December 16.

It was only in the last week of January that I could think of a donut as something to eat rather than something to sit on.

From Christmas I could say, with a smile, "All my pain is behind me," but now I feel better than I have felt during all of 1997.

Finally, I have a new computer so Bethany Ministries can extend the ministries of Prayer, Hospitality and Proclamation to the internet and e-mail.

In fact, if you wish to receive the next newsletter through your computer, and reduce the cost to Bethany Ministries, please e-mail me.

May the Lord bring a new spring to your spirit and your step, as God renews the miracle of the seasons once again.

Peace and Good,

*Peter Chepaitis, OFM*

Jerry Marten, continued from Page 1

County, and owned a vacation cabin there that we rarely used. While we were trying to decide where we would move, the Lord once again intervened.

Much to my surprise, my wife thought we should try living in our little cabin on the side of a mountain.

As you can imagine, it was quite a change from our usual manner of living, and I began to wonder why God had led a city boy like me to the Middleburgh area.

Then I went to Mass one day and heard a violin-playing Franciscan Friar. His name was Fr. Peter Chepaitis.

As I listened to his sermon and watched him pray the Mass, something deep inside me came alive and immediately recognized a kindred spirit. This man knew and spoke of the same God I had come to know and worship: the God of love!

Soon after, we became friends and I became involved in Bethany Ministries.

A big part of my life journey had been a battle years before with alcohol - through the grace of God, I just celebrated my 20th anniversary of sobriety.

Though I had been raised Catholic, by the time drinking became a problem in my life I had stopped going to church, and considered myself an agnostic.

God then dramatically entered my life, led me back to the church of my youth, and into the program of Alcoholics Anonymous. I had a complete change of life, and, before I left the Police Department, I became the director of the Department's counseling services unit, helping other cops with their problems with drinking and living day to day.

All this built a strong faith and trust in the Program and in a God who loved me!

One of the most important of the 12 steps for me has always been the 11th step, which states that,

*we "Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, as we understood God, praying only for the knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry that out."*

After arriving upstate, I felt a strong urge to start a rare type of AA meeting which, in place of the traditional procedure, starts out with 20 minutes of silent group meditation, followed by a period of deep, honest sharing and mutual support.

We first met at the Presbyterian Church in Breakabeen in April, 1996. After a break of several

## *From Sr. Anna*

Dear Friends of Bethany Ministries,

Bethany Ministries Refounding Core Team, (that Peter told you about in the last newsletter) had its first meeting on Wednesday, September 10, 1997.

We spent a good part of a day together from 10 AM until 3 PM. We were able to prayerfully and thoughtfully reflect on the vision and structure of Bethany Ministries as it has evolved to this point.

For some of us it was the first time we met "in person", and were able to share how each of us followed the path that led us to become a part of Bethany Ministries.

It was suggested that now that Bethany Ministries has been in existence for a while we might want to rework the Mission Statement and Goals to align with what is rather than our dream of what could be.

That project is "in process" and you will be hearing about it in the newsletter after the next Refounding Core Team meeting in April.

We were also able to stand on the plateau of the present and see how wonderful and awesome was the journey to this place and this time.

We were able to recognize the guidance of the *Power* that inspired, called, and brought us all together as Bethany Ministries.

It has been amazing that when we were sure that we would end up in the red, an unexpected donation of exactly the amount that was needed would arrive.

Or we would be asked to do a mission or some other form of proclamation ministry and the donation we received for it would be just enough --and I do mean just enough-- to pay the bills for the next few months.

At times our material needs are taken care of by friends who have limited financial means but had an extra dresser they were no longer using.

Another received a gift of a new electric can opener and gave their older, but still functioning one, to Bethany Ministries.

Even the car Peter uses, a 1977 Chevy, came through the intervention of a Friar friend who put him in touch with someone who wanted to sell it for a dollar to some worthy cause. It has been getting Peter where he needs to go for three years now.

Sometimes the support comes in other ways.

Holy Name Province for the first years of Peter's involvement in Bethany Ministries waived the usual contribution each friar sends in for provincial support.

Jerry Marten, continued from Page 2

months, it resumed at St. Catherine's Church in Middleburgh.

Since then it has evolved into an open prayer meeting based on the 11th step which is attended not only by recovering alcoholics but by others who seek to pray in silence and to share from their hearts.

Since its inception, Fr. Peter has been an integral part of the group, and has served as its chaplain and mentor.

Even though I have recently moved closer to Albany, the good work continues, as leadership rotates among the 7-12 people who regularly gather on Tuesday nights.

I no longer wonder why God led both me and Peter to Schoharie county - the 11th Step Prayer Group is just one of the many good works being done by Bethany Ministries.

Lives are being touched, people are being changed. Please continue your support!

*Jerry*

Sr. Anna, continued from Page 2

So far in '98 he was able to send in a portion of it to help support the sick and retired Friars and the Province's generous support for the poorest in our society.

Clare encouraged the other Poor Ladies at San Damiano and Agnes in Prague to live the Gospel and to trust in the Lord to provide for their needs, both spiritual and material. God has seen to it that like the Poor Ladies of Assisi and Prague just enough for our needs has come through ministry stipends and donations.

Be assured that whenever we gather for prayer, including the celebration of the Eucharist, we include all of you and your intentions, for you too are a part of Bethany Ministries.

Peace & abundant blessings from God,

*Anna*

---

### *A Letter from Kateri*

Dear Friends,

Peter asked me to write about Bethany Ministries' Nature Art. It started in the Winter of '95-'96 when I began doing some simple wood carving and painting on wood. Nature Art is simply creating art out of God's Creation!

As time went on, my wood carving skills improved and at present the wood carvings include ~ crosses, tau crosses, friar figures, simple Nativity sets, and an occasional wood art piece.

God blesses me - as I still have all my fingers with only one mishap requiring a few stitches (and that happened when I first bought my set of wood carving tools).

I also make dream catchers in all sizes. It was Sister Anna who first taught me this art. But now each of the dream catchers seem to take on a life of its own as bits of stone, shell, pinecones, special twigs (such as those from the witch hazel bush that are a symbol of healing) all come together in the woven web of the dream catcher.

Although I have to purchase some stones with predrilled holes, I am able to find many of the materials for the dream catchers on my walks through forests and fields around here.

Each dream catcher comes with a copy of the Lakota "Legend of the Dream Catcher" and a written list of each item (and its symbolism) that that particular dream catcher contains.

In addition to the wood carvings, paintings, and the dream catchers, Nature Art offers other items such as clay beads, natural hand/lip balm, and stone burners for Astick incense."

The clay beads are exciting for me to do because they require a multi-seasonal process.

In the summer I walk down to the Little Schoharie Creek (behind my house) and dig out beautiful gray clay from the bottom of the creek. I put the clay in gallon size waterproof plastic bags and trek back to the house where I store the bags of clay in my refrigerator.

During the winter months, I take the clay, temper it, hand-roll each bead, bake the beads, hand-paint, and hand-burnish the beads. WHEW!

The natural lip/hand balm is also something I make and comes in 3/4 oz. jars and are small enough to keep in one's briefcase, pocket, purse, etc.

Suggested donations vary and depends on the availability of materials; the time spent in making them; size; etc.

*Love, Kateri*