

Will the Church be highly regarded like the Underground?" By Fred Wilgenburg

The Underground Railroad became the pathway to freedom for about 100,000 slaves in the 19th century. The Underground Railroad was a vast network of people who offered shelter, food, clothing, and funds to fugitive slaves as they made the dangerous journey out of the South. This practice was of great danger to the people offering refuge as well.

The Dutch Underground placed Dutch Jews into hiding --- peaking at 300,000 in the Fall of 1944 --- as Nazi Germany occupied the Netherlands. If the Jews were found, they were shipped to concentration camps, which were death camps for most of them. My paternal grandparents housed Jewish families on their farm, which was in addition to the 15+ family members they were already feeding in those scarce times. My maternal grandfather was involved in the administration of the Dutch Underground. If Dutch Underground workers were caught, they were often executed.

A hundred years from now, will the present 21st century Church, and its churches located in your community, be viewed in high regard like the Underground Railroad and the Dutch Underground? Are we as Christian churches and ministries a vast, organized network, known for shining brightly the love, grace, and truth of our God? Are we available, and are we resourced during these times of need in what can be a lonely, cold world for many who are outside? Are we seen as a network of Godly

mission stations, or as individual fortresses?

Those questions are not raised as an indictment against the Church, which I love, but rather, as a challenge and reminder. We can always love and serve our God deeper, and we can always love our neighbors more effectively. And usually, we love our neighbors more effectively when we in the churches know each other, and encourage each other, and minister as teammates for Jesus.

We at Center of Hope want to do our part! One way that we are trying is through **Iron Sharpens Iron**. Please check it out at www.centerofhopesf.org/iron. We write these posts 1-2 times each week on Facebook and through email. If you are interested in receiving them by email, request this at info@centerofhopesf.org. If you are interested in receiving them by Facebook, click 'Like' somewhere on our Center of Hope page and you will become our 'Friend'. You will see that we encourage feedback and dialogue.

If your church is considering trying a new mercy ministry or evangelistic outreach, we would welcome the opportunity to share

what we have been learning. After doing winter clothing, bikes-for-work, a meal ministry, outreach worship, basketball nights, Kids Hangout after school, faith community nursing, a friendship program, Bible studies, offering computers for the public's use, a Care Center, and many kinds of pastoral visits, we have experienced a lot! Many of the programs continue, and they have been enhanced, while others have quit for various reasons. We continually evaluate: 1) are we empowering or enabling our guests? 2) does this program fit our vision for ministry? 3) is this program pointing a person toward knowing God/Jesus more personally? 4) has this program run its course, or can it/should it be reinvented?

Please call 605-334-9789, or email info@centerofhopesf.org if you are interested in visiting. We want to do our part so God's Church of today is viewed like those Underground efforts --- invaluable as a guide for many to Freedom!



**IRON
SHARPENS
IRON**
PROVERBS 27:17

BEST SPORTS NIGHT YEAR! BY AARON VAN'T HUL

This was the best Sports Night year yet. We had a new facility (Linwood Church) that gave us the capacity to play two basketball games at once. We are thankful for the opportunity to build relationships with, and share the love of Jesus with, as many people as possible. This year we had roughly 60-70 different young men come to play basketball (this does not include those that come to watch the games and who also participate in the Bible Study time.)



We had some young men who made commitments to give their lives over to Jesus, which is very exciting. Also, because our Restored 2 Life Church adopted it as their outreach, we hope to get even more people from Sports Night to come and attend worship. Some from Sports Night have already come

to check the R2L service out and some are faithful attenders from week to week. I want to thank all those that came and helped lead the basketball nights: Brian Narcomey, Dave Van Roekel, Eric Stephenson, Mike Richards, Justin Burns, and Brian Gossman. Without these men of Faith, the night would not be possible. I am very thankful to have been part of leading this ministry program for 6 years.



What Does the Center of Hope do? We...

1) distribute winter clothing & bikes-for-work at minimal prices. 2) we meet most guests in our Care Center. 3) We do many Pastoral visits. 4) we have Restored 2 Life church, which includes Sports Night for many young men. 5) we have weekly Bible Studies. 6) we do Faith Community nursing. 7) we offer Journey Camp for children.

MEMORIAL GIFTS

Center of Hope appreciates gifts made...

In memory of:

Lois Eneboe,

Wilmer "Willie" Elbers

As always, we are happy to have you on our mailing list. Please let us know if you would like to be removed from our list or have your newsletter sent electronically.



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