

April 20, 2010

Dear ministry partner,

The first time I stepped into the Housing Projects of Newark, New Jersey I knew I had been completely mistaken in what I had expected. Some of my expectations were accurate of course, it was very poor looking, there were windows that were cracked and broken, trash scattered everywhere you turned, and everything seemed to be withering, all the doors, stairs, etc.. However, what I hadn't expected was the laughter I heard when I entered into the courtyard, laughter that was so innocent and beautiful! It was then, when I saw these beautiful, innocent children laughing as they threw snow balls at each other, that I could take a sigh of relief. Despite the sadness, and the living conditions, there was laughter, which meant there was hope.

Newark is a broken community. There are a lot of broken people who have been raised in unfair atmospheres, which have led them to confusion and hurt. It's a very poor community, and there aren't a lot of opportunities for the people who live there. However, despite all these things, there is hope for redemption in Newark! I have seen this hope being portrayed there through loving people at Trinity Reformed Church, where I went for a mission trip during my spring break this past February. The love of Christ being poured out through this ministry is really amazing and I have been given the opportunity to work with them this summer as a summer intern. This chance, I have been blessed with, is more than I could ever ask for. Having the opportunity to share the love of Christ with such a broken city is an amazing thing, and I don't know if there are words to describe how thrilled I am!

I'll be in Newark from June 1 - August 15th, and during that time I'll be very busy! When I first arrive I'll be going through training for the summer, as well as helping with the after school program they have every day for the children in the community, called SHAC. Once the school year ends I'll be helping to run a summer camp program that will begin in July and go through August. I'm also hoping to get involved with a homeless ministry, a drug rehabilitation facility, regular youth group, and many other relational mentorships! The time that I'll be up there will also be an amazing growing experience for me. I won't be living with all the material possessions that I have been blessed with, and I will have to learn how to live with much less, which I think is going to be hard for me at first, but such a great thing for me to undergo. I also know that I'll be growing in my relationship with the Lord, having to rely on him with so much more than I have now. It excites me to know I'll be so much more aware of how much I need Him, it'll truly be an eye-opening experience.

While I'm in Newark, I will be staying in an apartment rented by the church. Since this is not a paid internship, I'll be needing to pay for rent, utilities, and all of my other living expenses as well, including groceries (and food in general), and even everything from toothpaste, and shampoo to traveling expenses (like a bus ticket home to see my family!). I'll also have to contribute to the program and the equipment I'll be using through my internship. When the math has all been calculated, it ends up that I will be needing \$3,950.00 this summer.

I've never considered myself a spiritual person, but I've always wanted to experience the Holy Spirit. When I was in Newark over spring break, I was able to do so. Being in this city can definitely take its toll on you when you're surrounded by such brokenness and hurt. However, every single time I felt like I had nothing more to give, God was there to spur me onwards. I could feel the Holy Spirit working in me throughout the whole time I spent there, and the feeling was miraculous. If I were alone in this task, I would be unable to make any difference in Newark, but through Christ pushing me and guiding me I was able to love like I never have before, and I want no more than the ability to do that again this summer. The children in Newark are in desperate need for love and compassion, and I am honored that the Lord is burdening me with this opportunity to do so. This is why I'm sending out these letters, and pursuing this chance to glorify God.

The first and most important thing I need, is prayer. Despite my excitement to serve my Lord, it's going to be a hard task, and I'll need prayers for strength and patience. Along with that though, I also need financial support. As I mentioned before, I'll need to raise \$3,950.00 this summer to be able to live and serve in Newark. If you are willing to support me in this endeavor, it would mean so much to me. However, I know that times are so tough right now, and I want you to know that prayer is more than enough, as well!

Thank you so much for reading this letter, that alone is extremely encouraging! If you're interested in learning more about this ministry you can definitely ask me any questions you have, or check out these sites: <http://www.spendyourself.org/> and <http://www.newarksafehaven.com/>. I also plan on having a blog while I'm in Newark, to keep anyone updated who is interested, on my experiences there! Thank you so much, again!

It's only through Christ that I can even begin to write this letter,

Tara Thompson

