

# Birth And Rebirth

## *A Mother's Story*

In November, 2008, TK left the Baylor Correctional Center for Women to enter the Friendship House Transitional Housing Program for Women. After 18 months of incarceration, she was starting over. Her first stop was the Jane Ashford House which provided TK with a secure, supportive, home-like and respectful environment from which she could address those issues that had kept her homeless. Soon she found a stable job and with the help of the women's housing staff settled into a new way of life. TK was striving not simply to overcome a 25 year drug addiction that had all but ruined her life; she was also seeking to be re-united with a child born to her in prison and now in foster care.

In February, 2009, TK went to court to request supervised visits with her 18 month old baby. Despite her past history, DFS (Division of Family Services) tentatively supported her request. With the court's approval, visitation began between TK and her child. At first the visits were supervised by a social worker and lasted only a few hours. TK had already graduated to Palmer House, the second stage of the transitional housing program, where she had her own one bedroom apartment. As TK demonstrated her commitment to becoming a responsible parent, DFS gradually allowed her first unsupervised visitation and then overnight stays with her child at Palmer House.

Everything seemed to be going very well. DFS was in favor of reuniting TK and her child. The Friendship House staff were in favor of reunification. The baby was happy to see its mother and very sad when it had to leave her. However, the foster parents began to raise objections to the plan for reunification between TK and her child. At one point, when the DFS worker went to pick up the baby for a visit with its mother, the foster parent was not at home and did not reappear for hours. Later, DFS agreed to place the baby with TK and TK made arrangements for child

care, a change in her work hours, and got the apartment ready for a permanent child resident.

In April of 2009, on the very day the baby was to come live with its mother, the foster parent filed an emergency petition with the court to deny TK's parental rights. TK's visits with her child were interrupted for several weeks. She was required to see a psychiatrist for an evaluation of her interaction with the baby. Since the psychiatrist's office was located downstate, TK had to rearrange her work schedule and make expensive and time-consuming trips downstate for these meetings. More court hearings were held, several of which lasted all day. Upon returning to Palmer House from one such hearing, TK and the FH staff person who had accompanied her noticed a stranger in a parked car taking pictures of TK and Palmer House. The man was evidently a private detective hired to catch TK doing something that could be used against her in court. Her reaction was, "I have nothing to hide! I'm not doing anything wrong."

Court hearings, psychiatric evaluations, and legal delays continued for six months. In this long and stressful legal battle, TK has had to listen to testimony about her past and had her character picked to pieces. Through it all, however, she has maintained her sobriety, worked hard, and cared for her child for whom she was given temporary custody. Humbled, she has had to rely on God and her community of friends as never before.

In October, the judge finally ruled that no more hearings would be held and that a decision would be given within a month of the last hearing. On the Tuesday before Thanksgiving, TK received written notice that she had been given back custody of her daughter. In her own words, "What a Thanksgiving Gift!"

## **Interested in learning more about Friendship House?**

**You are invited to take a tour of Friendship House programs.**

**Tours are scheduled on a regular basis and offer an overview of our ministries.**

**At the end of an hour and a half, you'll have a good idea of all that we offer!**

**Please call Lu Johnston at 302-652-8033 to set up a time convenient to your schedule.**

# God Has No Room For Bushel Baskets

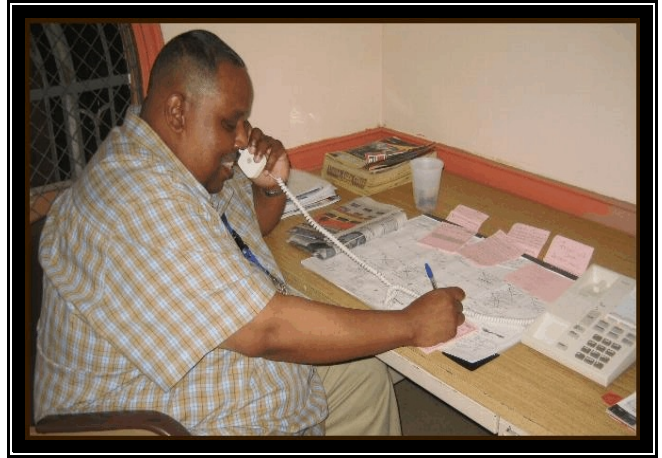
*“Do not hide your light under a bushel basket, but let it shine before all”*

*by Bill Perkins, Executive Director*

For almost 25 years my brother Carey's light has been trapped under a bushel basket of his own creation. Alcohol, drugs and rage wove a darkness that he seemed powerless to control or overcome. He was not proud of this behavior, and was secretly very sad and frightened. As the downward spiral continued, his problems continued to escalate until he lost everything – his job, his wife, his home and his health. For years, he was forced to rely solely on our elderly parents for financial support. When they passed away last year he seemed to have reached the end of his rope.

Those of us who loved him did what we could to provide him temporary shelter and try to find him help, but it did not seem to be enough. With his options running out my brother's depression worsened and he seemed to lose hope. By July, the prospect of spending the winter on the streets of Wilmington seemed inevitable. With his multiple health issues, homelessness would be a death sentence. His life had hit bottom.

At that moment when he had to choose to die or live, my brother chose life. He is sick and tired of being sick and tired. At my suggestion, he went to see Bill Perkins at the Friendship House Men Center. Although they had met several times before, this time was different. My brother Carey was ready to do whatever it took to turn things around. Together Bill and Carey put together a plan of action and a daily schedule. From that day to this Carey has faced his problems and worked his program. As he once again took responsibility for his life, he was reborn and kicked that 25 years old bushel basket right out of his life. God has given him a new chance at life, and he is making the most of it.



With much needed medical attention and intense therapy my brother has discovered his emotional disability is both treatable and no impediment to living a full and purposeful life. By attending daily 12 step meetings, he is learning that recovery is lived one day at a time. He is learning how to use the computer and public transportation. The greatest lesson he has learned is that life is a GIFT that should be cherished.

Since August, Carey has been the Men's Day Center volunteer receptionist. By relieving the harried staff of the constantly ringing phones, he developed his own special ministry. Callers are greeted by a gentle, patient voice. Messages are accurately recorded. If he doesn't know the answer, Carey asks the staff person who does and passes along the information. He has done an incredible job.

In October, Carey learned that his Social Security Disability was finally approved. By Christmas he will be in his own apartment. His light and joy is shared by everyone who loves him and for whom he is an gift and a blessing from God.

## Alternative Christmas

**You may choose to send a donation to Friendship House in honor of a loved one for the Holidays. Friendship House will send a decorative Holiday Card to the person being honored.**

**Send your donation along with the name and address of your loved one to Friendship House, PO Box 1517, Wilmington, DE 19899. If you have any questions call Roxane Blake at 302-652-8133.**