



July 2012

Dear friends of the Matthew 25 House:

This is my summer update covering the goings and doings in the house and the lives of the men who call 330 South 2<sup>nd</sup> Street “home.”

The house currently has four men who call it home. These men are religiously focused on changing old lifestyles into Christ-based lifestyles. As we all know, change is harder than it sounds. As I have the honor to spend time with each man I see positive, life changing attitudes and decision-making processes emerging. I know that many of these changes are the result of the guys allowing God to take greater control of their lives.

### **Current Residents**

Jonathan W. – is still doing an outstanding job as the Head Resident. The Matthew 25 House is running very smoothly. The attitude in the home is positive, supportive and loving. There is a real feeling that this is a home and not just a place to serve time until you can be on your own. Jonathan can be credited with creating this positive environment for the men to grow. Jonathan is still fully employed as a prep chef for Old Main Brewery and Restaurant in downtown Ames. He has recently been promoted to a supervisory position. Most days he has enjoyed the additional responsibilities and challenges that come with managing people. If you were to ask Jonathan if he has had struggles since the last update letter he would tell you he has.

The wonderful thing about struggles is that they reveal the true heart and soul of a man as he faces them and battles to overcome them. I have found myself weeping as I’ve watched the God-honoring manner in which Jonathan has faced his challenges. He has emerged a stronger and more humble man. July 14, 2012 marks the completion of his year at Matthew 25 House, a milestone! In the last 12 months I’ve seen great growth in his personal and spiritual life. The desire of the Matthew 25 House Board is for Jonathan to continue to live at the house and perform his current role as the head resident.

Doug B. – We had the opportunity to participate in one of the highlights of the Matthew 25 House, a graduation celebration on Sunday, June 24<sup>th</sup>. Doug moved from the Matthew 25 House to an apartment in Ogden, IA at the end of June. He selected Ogden as his new hometown so he could be close to his sixteen-year-old daughter. Doug’s newfound relationship with his children has been a major factor in his success at the Matthew 25 House. It was humbling to hear the other residents share with Doug the value he has brought into their lives. Each one of the men has told me privately how much they are going to miss Doug’s influence in the house.

As I prepared to write Doug a letter for his graduation celebration I reread some of the letters I had sent him while he was in prison. I ended a letter written on July 22, 2008 as follows: “Doug, I truly believe that only God can change you and your life. My prayer for you is that you will allow Him into your life and build a strong relationship with Him during the time you are locked up.” I know the changes I have seen in Doug are the result of him allowing God to work mightily to change his heart and perspective of the world. I consider Doug a close friend and will miss spending time with him on a regular basis. I just praise the Lord for bringing Doug into the lives of me and my family. Doug is still doing well at work and enjoying his role as the crew leader of his work team. I look for good things from Doug as he writes a new page in the book of his life.



Celebration Cake



Presentation of Certificate of Completion as a resident of the Matthew 25 House

Nahshon P. – has been working at Old Main Brewery and Restaurant in downtown Ames but just recently started a new job with Caruth Construction. His supervisor is Doug Berglund and they are enjoying the opportunity to work together. Nahshon has taken in stride the hard work of being on a foundation crew with all the sore muscles, sunburned skin and cuts and bruises. Nahshon continues to find opportunities to use his gifts of drawing and music in positive ways. God has given him some great talents in these areas. He continues to grow in his relationship with God as he attends the First Evangelical Free Church and an early morning men's group. The men in this group find Nahshon's perspective refreshing and sometimes outside of their normal life experiences. Nahshon has been able to present a positive image of a man coming out of prison and attempting to live a life that honors God. I continue to enjoy getting to know Nahshon and discovering the unique life experiences that have molded him into the man he is today.

Jerry B. – arrived at the Matthew 25 House on April 21, 2012. Jerry had applied to the House when he was serving time at the Fort Dodge Correctional Facility but was turned down because of a lack of space. He found his way to Ames anyway, and was admitted because he needed the stability and support of the House to address his challenges. Jerry has found part time work at the Dollar Tree and Pizza Ranch. Due to his back problems work can be a very painful endeavor, yet he continues to work and is looking forward to taking advantage of opportunities that will come because of his desire to be the best employee possible.

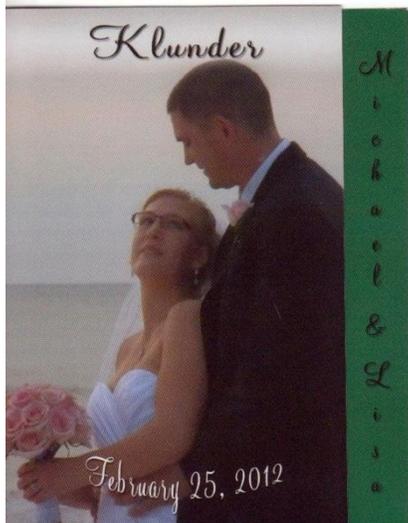
Jerry has reconnected with his family and has begun building positive relationships with his children and grandchildren. Jerry had the privilege of being with his son a few weeks ago when his third grandchild was born in Des Moines. This was very special for Jerry since he was in prison when his first two grandchildren were born. I've had the privilege of seeing and hearing firsthand both the losses these men have encountered because of decisions they've made and the joys they experience in being able to celebrate life events with their families. Because of his health issues Jerry is facing the challenge of finding employment that is sustainable. Yet he has not given up and continues to believe that through God all things are possible.

### **Past Residents**

Jeremiah M. – Jeremiah made the decision to misuse his driving privileges which resulted in his being charged with a parole violation. He is currently in the Story County Jail awaiting his hearing. I have been in communication with Jeremiah and he has a positive attitude. In one of his letters to me he wrote, *"I still firmly believe God has me here for a reason and I do not doubt His will for me one bit. I recently finished the New Testament and went back to read and study the Old Testament. I know one thing for sure I have gotten from being here is a much better relationship with Christ. This in turn brightens my day every time I pick up His*

*Word and read. I know even if I have to go back to prison for a year or two that is nothing compared to 40 – 50 years with God and eternity in heaven.” Praise God for his goodness and support in times of challenges.*

Alan S. – Alan made some decisions that required him to move out of the Matthew 25 House. He is currently working and living in Ogden, IA. I have the opportunity to see him on occasion when he stops by the bank to do some of his personal banking. Alan is still doing battle with some personal challenges that I pray he will find the strength to overcome.



Michael K. – Michael left the Matthew 25 House in 2011 and has kept in contact with the house as his new life has developed. On February 25, 2012 he was married in sunny Florida on the beach. Michael and Lisa had a wedding reception in Story City, IA on May 25, 2012 to celebrate their union with friends and family.

I see him occasionally at Men’s Fraternity, an early morning men’s group he attended with me when he was in the Matthew 25 House. He is working and has adjusted to his new life. It is fulfilling to know that many people over many years have influenced Michael’s life in such a way that today he is a productive member of society and has a healthy relationship with Jesus Christ.

Michael D. – Michael has returned to Iowa after spending the winter in North Carolina with his brother. He is working for the City of Ames and assisting with small jobs as friends request his help. He is looking forward to working a number of Motorcycle Rodeos this summer. I have the chance to spend time with Michael on a regular basis, mostly while eating ice cream with him and my family at our favorite central Iowa ice cream stands. We do travel a number of miles to enjoy ice cream and each others’ company!

## **Upcoming Events**

August 25, 2012 – This is the date for the Matthew 25 House 2nd Annual Bike Ride! The ride is designed to increase awareness of the Matthew 25 House in the Ames community (and the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of people coming out of prison) and to raise funds to operate the House. The ride is a round trip from Ames to Slater, Iowa, ending at the Matthew 25 House. The ride will conclude with residents and board members of the Matthew 25 House providing lunch for all participants.

I hope this short update provides you some insight into the Matthew 25 House and the men currently living there. If you have any questions about the house or the application process, please contact me. If you desire to communicate with any of the men currently living in the house you can send them a letter at the address below, or I would be glad to provide their email address or cell phone number.

The Matthew 25 House is funded 100% by donations from individuals and organizations with a heart for men who have been incarcerated and who are now wanting a chance to live a different life.

If you have the desire and ability to support the Matthew 25 House you may send your tax-deductible contribution to the address below.

Church’s currently supporting the Matthew 25 House: St. John’s Episcopal, St. Cecilia Catholic, Collegiate Presbyterian, New Birth Baptist, University Baptist, and First Evangelical Free

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