



The Light



Holiday 2003

HOLIDAY LIGHTS

The holiday season will be here before we know it! Do you fret about finding the perfect gift for the person who has everything or who doesn't want anything? Well, don't worry anymore because First Light has the perfect solution. You can give a unique and meaningful gift to your loved ones while brightening the lives of homeless women and children. Lights will shine from the First Light building in honor or remembrance of those you love or as a gift to someone special through your donation to First Light. First Light will mail a holiday card to the recipient of your gift. The lights will burn through Hanukkah and Christmas. A Holiday Lights brochure should be coming to you in the mail soon! Don't fret! Give the gift of light to brighten the lives of homeless women and children at First Light!



RED Light = \$10.00

GREEN Light = \$20.00

BLUE Light = \$30.00

GOLD Light = \$50.00

STRING of Lights = \$100.00

**More information about
 Holiday Lights can be
 found on our website:
www.firstlightshelter.org**

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Christmas Needs

The shelter is home for the holidays for the guests at First Light. The holiday season can be a hard time for our women and children. But with your help, we can lift spirits! Every year we surprise the women and children with large gift bags full of all kinds of goodies! If you, your organization, church, school or club would like to help, call 323-4277 to find out more! Ask for Valerie or e-mail flcoordinator@yahoo.com



Need a speaker ?

If you need a speaker for your civic meeting, congregational meeting or organization, please call or e-mail us! We have staff that would love to tell you about all of the wonderful things happening at First Light. Call 323-4277 or E-mail flshelter@aol.com.

How Can You Help?

First Light depends on volunteers to bring and serve dinner every night of the year. We also rely on volunteers to stay overnight in the emergency shelter every night of the year, acting as hosts/hostesses, and often providing a listening ear, a shoulder to be cried on and arms that hug. Collecting wish list items is also a fun and rewarding group thing to do. Be creative. If you have a volunteer project that you would like to do, please let us know! Volunteers are an invaluable part to making First Light a reality. We could not do this without you!

The Amen Corner

Grace and peace to you all! My name is Mary Beth LeCroy, and I am the new chaplain at First Light. I am a student at Princeton Theological Seminary (Princeton, NJ) and am working at First Light for a year long internship.

I write in this corner of the newsletter as a witness to the great faith that I see at work in this place. I write as a witness to a faith that passes all understanding; for I, for one, do not understand it.

Where does faith come from? Where does it come from when you are battered, wandering, rejected, oppressed, invisible? The faith that I see in this place continues to surprise me, to bowl me over, to delight me and to cause me to wonder. For I see women here who bow their heads in the midst of their questions, who laugh and delight in God's creation and who pray the Psalms and other prayers of pain as the night passes over them.

And so, I ask again in utter awe and amazement: *Where does such faith come from?*

I am compelled to conclude that it must come from God. For who else would create such a thing in us, such a ridiculous, inconceivable, surprising, wondrous thing? I don't know why God gives the gift of faith. As I write this, I find myself wondering if God, perhaps, gives it more freely, more beautifully, more ripely to those who are broken.

Mary certainly seems to agree. In Luke's Gospel, the angel Gabriel appears to Mary and tells her that she will be the mother of God's promised Savior. At this announcement, Mary breaks into song. She says, "God has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty!"

Mary's faith, like the faith that I see here, comes from the God who sides with the broken, with the vulnerable, with the weak.

Perhaps I should not be so surprised to find faith here after all.

Granada Gala 2003

This year's Granada Gala was a huge success! We must thank all of the artists who donated their work to First Light for the silent and live auctions. We are also indebted to Ken Jackson for volunteering his time and talent as the auctioneer; to Courtney McGukin, our sound engineer, and to Robin Wilson, our photographer. This year's Gala was sponsored by:

Baker, Donelson, Caldwell & Berkowits, PC
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Alabama Power Energizers
American Cast Iron Pipe Company
AmSouth Bank
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Shelter Stories

May 5, 2003

"...My prayer for this place is that God will bless it above and beyond my wildest dreams, so that I can really contribute more than just my time and lasagna to the precious souls who grace the doors of this wonderful place. I never cease to be blessed and encouraged by the women here—and I am so grateful to God for sending each and every one of them into my path."

-Holly Hart—Cathedral Church of the Advent

May 10, 2003

"This is my second time volunteering for overnight stay. The ladies are really nice, and I could not help but notice how comfortable and "at home" they seem to feel. Most of the ladies seemed happy and very jovial. There was a lot of camaraderie. There is one lady that seemed happy and very jovial. There is one lady that seems to be a "mother" to the others. She seems to make sure that the newcomers were taken care of. The atmosphere here is warm and friendly. I am sure God is pleased with First Light. I noticed a shortage of deodorant. -Linda Quarles

September 26, 2003

We're four freshman students from Samford University who, (at the beginning), have just come to do a project on homeless women. Personally, being the only guy of the group, I felt a little out of place. However, throughout the night things got a lot better. We sat and talked to quite a few very nice ladies and watched a 19 year old knit a blanket...it was awesome! It was really cool to worship with them and see how they all act and have different personalities. It was a true eye-opener, and it won't take just a project for any of us to come back and volunteer!

-John, Rachel, Sarah and Katie

Counselor's Corner

"Why can't you just snap out of it? The mind is strong; you can control your mood. You can will yourself out of feeling blue. Stop feeling sorry for yourself. Life goes on and there is no time to be depressed." To a person that is suffering from depression, these comments cannot only be hurtful, but can send that person even further into depression.

Depression is a biological condition that affects about 10 percent of the population. It is a condition that can affect all aspects of an individual's life, including how she eats, sleeps, views herself and thinks about things. Depression can become so debilitating that a person can lose her job, her home and even her life. Yet, some people still believe that people with depression can pull themselves together and get over it.

Part of fighting depression is reducing the stigma around having it or any type of mental illness. By giving those with depression the same compassion and understanding as we give to people with heart disease or cancer, individuals will be more likely to seek advice from a medical professional and follow a recommended treatment plan. After all, you would not tell someone suffering from a heart attack to "just get over it".

If you think that you have depression or know of someone who may be depressed, consult a physician. Treatment is available. You can get more information from the National Institute of Mental Illness at www.nimh.nih.gov.

Robin Hunter, Counselor, MA, ALC

The Light I See

Written by Elizabeth, a First Light Guest

Abuse is a subject that most people don't want to talk about. Physical abuse you can see, and mental abuse is hidden, but all abuse is wrong. Each abuse needs to be addressed. Young and old are abused. The physical abuse is bad. No woman should be beaten, hidden from people, ridiculed, made smaller to make him look good, told not to speak—to be black and blue, to lose children by being beaten. This abuse is wrong. It is wrong to be made to work the streets to make his money for his drugs, to be treated like an animal—no animals get more respect than this. Mental abuse is just as bad. You must break away, get away, talk about the problems, tell everyone. You can receive the help you desire and receive the hug that God and a friend can offer. Learn to love yourself today.

Will You Help?

You can make a difference in the lives of Birmingham's homeless women and children.

You can provide shelter from a life on the streets where there is no place to go when it is raining and cold, except for a business building's overhang, under a bridge, the public library or a cardboard house made from boxes rescued from a dumpster.

You can make a sanctuary available to women and children 24 hours a day with social and counseling services.

You can help provide specialized programs geared to chronically mentally ill women, those who cannot complete traditional day care programs.

You can give homeless women a reason to get up every day, a boost of self-confidence, a source of motivation and job experience through First Light's Coffee Shop program, First Perk.

No one deserves to be homeless. No one plans on being homeless, abused, mentally ill or addicted to drugs and/or alcohol.

Will you help provide shelter to homeless women and children in a place of hope and love with a sense of home and family?

If you don't, who will?

I (we) make the following gift, offering a physical example of commitment, care and concern for homeless women and children.

- \$15,000 \$1,000
- \$10,000 \$500
- \$5,000 \$100 \$25
- \$3,000 \$50 \$_____

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/ZIP _____

Phone _____



FIRST LIGHT, INC.
2230 FOURTH AVENUE NORTH
BIRMINGHAM, AL 35203

Phone: 205-323-4277
 Fax: 205-323-8362
 E-mail: firstlightinc@aol.com



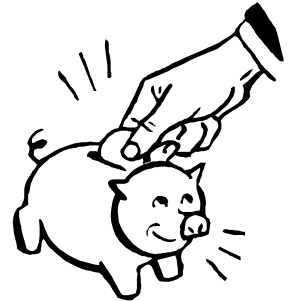
Our mission is working with homeless women, their children and others at risk to create hospitality in a safe and nurturing community, encouraging them to maintain dignity, to find hope, to seek opportunity and to grow spiritually, thereby achieving their full potential.

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First Light Wish List

- Paper or Styrofoam plates, bowls or cups
- Quart and Gallon Size Ziploc bags
- Deodorant
- Hairbrushes and combs
- Medication boxes
- Ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil, Generic, etc.)
- Antacids, Pepto-Bismol, Laxatives
- Cold/Sinus/Allergy/Cough medicine
- Fruit, boxes of cereal and boxes of individually wrapped grits and oatmeal
- Powdered drink mixes (tea, kool-aid, etc.)
- Feminine Hygiene products
- Laundry Detergent
- Cleaning supplies- surface cleaner, dish washing liquid, etc.
- Toilet bowl brushes
- Pens
- Pillows
- Toothbrush, toothpaste, and soap travel holders
- Bath towels
- Underwear- all sizes



• *Cash donations allow us to continue to serve Birmingham's homeless women and children.*

- Twin size blankets
- Socks
- Lotion