

Those Peculiar Johnsons

I Peter 2:9 "...You are God's peculiar people..." • 2018

No one knows whose womb holds the chief! *African Proverb*

A Real First Chance: Another New Year's Resolution

We must be truthful. We have not had a string of forward-moving successes. Instead, we have had a lot of unexpected hurdles and obstacles. By God's grace and with your help, we can try again. As a New Year's resolution, let's start with Trina's story. She never truly had a real first chance.



Trina Garnett was abandoned at the age of 9 and spent the next four years living on the streets, foraging through garbage cans to survive. By the age of 14, having suffered both physical and mental abuse, she had visible scars on her body and emotional scars that kept her mired in poverty and chaos. It was then that she committed the crime of arson, causing the death of two people. She was declared mentally incompetent to stand trial by court psychiatrists, but nonetheless, Trina was sentenced to die in prison because of mandatory sentencing requirements in juvenile capital crimes. She was serially raped by her prison guards, giving birth to a child who was taken from

her and placed in foster care. Her full story can be found in detail on the Equal Justice Initiative website: <https://eji.org/trina-garnett>.

She needs a real first chance. At Out of Nazareth Ministries, we are working with others to sponsor her in parole hearings and find housing for her. Since her conviction over 30 years ago, Trina has been stricken with a severe neurologic disease, rendering her incapable of living alone. Finding housing for a severely handicapped, wheelchair bound, newly-released prisoner is not easy. We are still looking.

We stand with men and women like Trina in parole hearings, vouch for them for job placement, and help provide necessary documents for utilities and other social services. Many of those released have been imprisoned for 30 to 35 years—most of their lives. They don't have a clue how to integrate into a society where families have forgotten them or, even worse, refuse to remember them as part of their own. We hope to offer the "Juvenile-Lifers" a real first chance.

At Miriam Medical Clinics, we are privileged to offer medical services for men and women who live in halfway houses or on the streets and who, like Trina, have recently been released from incarceration.

Miriam Medical Clinics had proposed to open two new sites by mid-summer of 2017. These openings have been delayed by Philadelphia rezoning requirements and meeting the expectations of the boards and committees of the churches and civic groups. When we announced our big plans at the beginning of the year, we never expected to encounter these hurdles. In the meantime, we continue to offer healthcare to people who need a real first chance. We continue to do so with an all-volunteer staff of physicians, nurses, pharmacists, podiatrists, and dentists. We have been able to provide these services without regard for who can and cannot pay. We ask you to join us in prayer for more volunteers in every discipline of medicine and administration.

Give the gift of a real first chance to the men and women we serve. Your gift to these ministries through World Gospel Mission allows us to remain faithful to this call. Online gifts can be made at www.wgm.org/miriam.

In other news, I officially joined the ranks of senior citizen on December 13. Kay has signed me up for Medicare, and although I have heard that 65 is the new 45, I feel like it is the old 75. I sleep less, reflect more, and hopefully, speak more softly without the need of a big stick. We celebrated our 40th anniversary in June and the arrival of our latest grandchild, Micah Elijah, in March. Here he is being examined by his older brother, Tyson Michael; and here we are, trying new exercises to keep our bones and bodies limber.



Thank you for caring enough to be a part of what we are doing to provide healing and hope for a real first chance for so many.

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P.S. FK got another chance and we were part of it. Having participated in his parole hearing, it looked rather bleak. Six months later, he has been released. We met with him at a halfway house as he transitions to life on the outside. Keep FK in your prayers. His new location is far from home and family which has its stressors, but may be a good thing. He seems determined to make this chance work. We will stand with him to help.



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