

PRAY

Christ be with me.
 Christ within me.
 Christ behind me.
 Christ before me.
 Christ beside me.
 Christ to win me.
 Christ in hearts
 of all that love me.
 Christ in mouths
 of friend and
 stranger.

St. Patrick's Breastplate

2nd Sunday of Lent



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SPiRIT

OVER TROUBLED WATERS

BRIDGE

by Jane Mack

Bridge Over Troubled Waters reaches out to homeless and runaway teens.

Its offices overlook Boston Common, the park in the heart of downtown Boston.

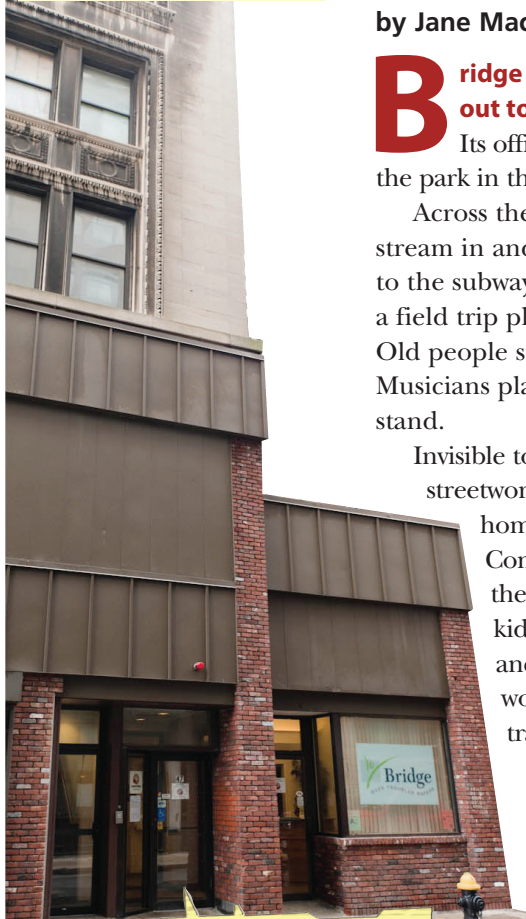
Across the street, shoppers and workers stream in and out of the Park Street entry to the subway—the T. Kindergarten kids on a field trip plant tulip bulbs in a flowerbed. Old people sit on benches feeding pigeons. Musicians play near the tourist information stand.

Invisible to tourists but present to Bridge streetworkers are the runaway and homeless teens who haunt the Common and other centers in the city. In 2009, 2,400 of these kids used Bridge counseling and medical services, GED and work development classes, and transitional housing.

Barbara Whelan, CSJ, was among the ten people who started Bridge nearly 40 years ago. An 8th-grade teacher then, she saw her students on drugs and wanted to do more. Five of the core group were Sisters of St. Joseph. Sister Barbara is still a Bridge board member today.

In 1970, when the five went to the streets to find what kids needed, the sisters of their community took turns making sandwiches to take along. Today a Bridge volunteer—“Sandwich Lady” Charlotte—makes the sandwiches that the Bridge medical van distributes at Park Street, Copley Square, and Harvard Square every weekday evening. Volunteer medical staff ride the van and offer basic first aid, referrals, and health advice. From the beginning Bridge workers have hung out with kids on their own turf.

Robb Zarges, Executive Director of Bridge Over Troubled Waters, is a tall man with a gentle presence and open manner. From his tiny office he talks about what motivates him to do this work.



1970s: Street Outreach

Free Medical Van
 Runaway Services
 Substance Abuse
 Counseling
 Free Dental Clinic
 GED program

1970:
 Bridge
 founded

1982:
 Transitional
 Living Program
 for homeless kids

**1989: Single
 Parent House
 for mothers with
 children**
 Cooperative
 Apartments

1990s:
 In-house
 Medical Clinic

Education
 and Career
 Development
 Program

2011:
 12-Bed
 Emergency
 Overnight
 Shelter

Bridge Timeline



“This is not a religious organization but for me it is a matter of living out my faith on a day-to-day basis,” Robb says. “Jesus talks about the poor all the time, about ministry to those on the fringe. Jesus transcends the political—he is about people and social justice for people.

“If Jesus were alive today, he probably would be here with Bridge kids or at other places where the people in need are,” Robb continues. “Jesus believed people could make a difference in each other’s lives. That is what we try to do here.”



Kalvin, 18

I had a little trouble my freshman year of high school. I goofed off, never did my work, got thrown out of class, never went to class. I regret it because it set me back. Sophomore year I had to take both freshman and sophomore classes.

I began to have problems at home with my father. I was stubborn and independent and wanted to do things my way with no help from anyone. My father thought the only way to do anything was his way. And I would not do it.

I joined the football team, which actually ended up affecting me negatively. The practice field was over an hour walk

away from my house. Practice didn’t end until seven. I got home tired, not wanting to eat. I went to sleep without doing homework. The next day I couldn’t stay awake in class and that led to more problems, particularly between me and my father, because I wasn’t doing what I had to in school.

That summer my father and I had a bunch of arguments. He almost kicked me out, so I took it upon myself to leave. I stayed with my friends or my uncle for a while. I now live with my father’s mother and have for about two years off and on. She got irritated with me because I was getting into some stuff like marijuana and hanging out with gang members.

Last year I tried to go back to high school in February. But I had been out of school for three months. It was hard to get back into the habit of schoolwork, and I thought there was no point because I was so far behind.

This year I just couldn’t do it. I went to my guidance counselor and she mentioned Bridge and their GED program. So I came and had my intake interview and started the program.

I really like the Bridge GED program. It’s like a library. I can do my work where it’s quiet; the teachers are attentive and open to working one-on-one. I’m hoping to pass my GED test this June.

“We want kids to understand that they have power over their lives,” Robb says. “We believe that anyone who walks in through this door has everything inside of them that they need to be successful in life.”



The Bridge medical van distributes food, first aid, and medical advice at several locations around the city every weekday night.

SUNDAY GOSPEL

2nd Sunday of Lent

Jesus' friends see who he is.

NARRATOR 1: Six days later Jesus took Peter, James, and John up a high mountain with him.

NARRATOR 2: He was transfigured before their eyes. His clothes became dazzling white—whiter than snow, whiter than any bleach on earth could make them.

NARRATOR 1: Then they saw Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus.

PETER: Teacher, how good it is for us to be here. Let us build three booths, one for you, one for Elijah, and one for Moses.

NARRATOR 2: Peter hardly knew what to say; they were all three very afraid.

NARRATOR 1: A cloud overshadowed them, and out of the cloud a voice spoke.

VOICE: This is my son, my beloved. Listen to him.

NARRATOR 2: Suddenly looking around they no longer saw anyone with them—only Jesus.

NARRATOR 1: As they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus gave them an order.

JESUS: Tell no one what you have seen until the Son of Man has risen from the dead.

NARRATOR 2: They did what he asked, though they discussed among themselves.

PETER: What does rise from the dead mean?

JAMES: I don't know.

JOHN: Me either.

Mark 9.2-10

Malcolm, 20

Malcolm was sent to juvenile detention after his junior year of high school and has been at Bridge for about 10 months.

When I was young, I was abused by several members of my family...to the point that I thought abuse was normal. It really messed up my mind.

When I got out of prison, a friend told me about the Bridge. I didn't even understand what it was. One day I was walking up West Street and saw the sign on the door...Bridge Over Troubled Waters. Then I got it. It was a place that would help me straighten myself out.

So I went in a week later and did an intake interview. The people were really nice and I wanted to stay. But another voice was telling me to go away and not disappoint these people, because I knew deep down inside I didn't want to get help yet.

QUESTIONS 1 How does Bridge help homeless teens transform their lives? 2 What do you think makes Bridge and its services work? 3 What does it mean to have power over one's life? 4 What is the most transforming, life-changing experience you have had? 5 What do Peter, James, and John see in Jesus that they hadn't seen before? 6 What is the power of being God's beloved?

On my first time here Bridge helped me with a lot of stuff—like interview clothing. They sent me to interviews and job fairs. For a while I thought that was enough, that I could just take this help and travel on my journey by myself.

So I left, and I had up and down days. I realize now that I should have stayed because I only knew myself a little bit. I left only to be caught, stuck in a jam, in a corner with no reliable resources. I was set back.

I came back and haven't left since. This is a home away from home. I don't live here but I wish I could; I still have to go back to the shelter every night.

I am trying to get over the hump now into some sort of in-between place where I will be satisfied and have a career. I'm trying to change; I'm learning to change. I don't do the stuff I used to. I'm going to keep on pushing myself, finding the enjoyment in my own life. But sometimes I get lost; I get stuck...

If I weren't here at Bridge, my life would be a disaster. I'd be incarcerated for the rest of my life or dead. I feel good when I'm here, even though I have my ups and downs. When I come into this building, it's like everything else just vanishes for the time being, until I get back outside, back to the shelter.

"In the end, a lot of distance stands between where the kids were on their path when we met them and where they are now," Robb continues. "Their lives are different. That's how we measure success. Malcolm gets up every day and spends his whole day here. That is success for him, walking through that door the second time after leaving the first."

Sacraments make God visible.

In the transfiguration Jesus becomes visible to Peter, James, and John as a transformed person. The vision anticipates Jesus' resurrection. His divinity shines through his humanity.

There are many times when our view of the world needs transformation. The apostles' view of Jesus is still limited when they suddenly see him transfigured, speaking with Elijah and Moses. For a moment Jesus' appearance reveals a glimpse of his glory. The apostles see it and are themselves transformed. They carry with them a new openness to Jesus' power and their own.

Jesus calls his followers to lifelong transformation, to listen and respond to the gospels in the way they live. Bridge Over Troubled Waters is in the business of helping youth transform their lives. Calvin finds a way to finish high school with a one-to-one teacher and a quiet place to work. Malcolm chooses to change and deal with his anger issues by coming to Bridge.

The sacraments also reveal glimpses of God's glory among us. Simple physical elements point to a larger reality. The signs of the Church's sacraments come from the created world: bathing in water, soothing with oil, eating bread, sharing wine, laying on hands. These actions remember Jesus' actions of healing and reaching out when he was on earth. Sacraments can't package God; they celebrate our faith that God is always and everywhere among us. They point to the sacramentality of the whole world.

The baptismal washing celebrates the new life Jesus empowers us to live. Smearing a cross on people's foreheads with sweet-smelling oil



celebrates the unseen presence of the Spirit in us. Fragrance, which invisibly fills a whole room, hints the presence of God's Spirit permeating our world.

When we come together to celebrate the sacrament of Eucharist, we bring with us the memory of love shared. The Eucharist says explicitly what we already suspected—that the Holy is present in the human.

God speaks to us through the visible creation. Our minds can read the traces of the Creator in the cosmos.

Catechism of the Catholic Church #1147

For when his friends had all gathered, Jesus gave bread and wine to his followers saying, "This is my body and blood, myself. I am here; I am present for you. Eat this, and know the presence of the Holy in yourselves and in each other. You already know it; experience it again." The Eucharist both celebrates and intensifies the sacramentality of all life.

We celebrate sacraments to become what we celebrate—signs of God's presence to one another. As a human, Jesus makes God visible. He is the sacrament of God. The Church is the Body of Christ. The seven sacraments of our faith make Jesus visible in our world as do we who become the signs we celebrate—water of new life, fire of love, bread for the hungry.

FAITH in ACTION

- 1 Pay one member of your family a real compliment this week. Better yet, pay one compliment to each member of your family.
- 2 The next time you are at Mass, focus on how you see Jesus present in the congregation and in yourself.
- 3 The environment reveals God's presence. Adopt a stretch of highway with your group, and make sure that portion of highway reveals God's creative hand as fully as possible.
- 4 Visit the *SPIRIT* website for prayers and activities: goodgroundpress.com.