

“She is My Beloved”: Adapting Big City Prostitution Rehabilitation Home Ministry Methods to  
the Tri-Cities Area

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### **A Drop in the Ocean: An Introduction**

Imagine the cozy town of Johnson City, nestled in the beautiful Appalachian Mountains of East Tennessee. A young and ambitious girl of eighteen years matriculates into a small liberal arts college that is removed from the hustle and bustle of city life. The bright-eyed girl, Nelly, decides to major in education as she has realized her deep desire to one day homeschool her children. The cleverly coined common phrase “Ring by Spring!” holds true as Nelly, now newly married to her dream husband William, graduates from college. They live in a nice neighborhood in Johnson City where William works at a local business, and Nelly delights in taking care of their two beautiful young children, Carrie and Jackson. One day, Nelly’s quiet world is thrown into cacophony. William’s business is shaken after a scandal is released to the public that he had been having an affair with a client. He then steps down from his position both as businessman and as husband and father, leaving his wife and two three-year-old children behind, to move away with his mistress. Nelly is devastated, emotionally unstable, and does not know how to provide for her children. She stays with her children during the day, and works as a bartender at night. Because of her fair looks, she has always been noticed by men and while working at the bar, many men make sexual comments to her. A few years of loneliness later, she begins to see different men—only to be left by them in the morning and rejected. Her broken heart begins to harden, and after one particularly bad breakup, she realizes that she does not have enough money to pay for groceries for that week. After she had been lewdly hit on yet again at work, she finally snaps. She accepts the drunken man’s advances and on her break she takes him to the back parking lot and for \$75, she does whatever he requests of her. She realizes that the \$75 was more than her payment for a whole night of bartending. This is the beginning of how Nelly becomes “Busty Blue-eyed Nellz 003” on a website for escorts. Eventually, after working in the

underground sex industry, Nelly becomes addicted to illegal drugs and turns trick<sup>1</sup> after trick to support her drug habit. After finding her to be an unstable mother, social services take her children away and place them in the foster system. Though Nelly is technically fictional, her story is that of many women in the area, successful educated women who find themselves in deplorable unimaginable circumstances. Where is hope for these women? Why does no one reach out to them? James 1:27 states that Christians are to tend to widows. Jesus said that if people meet the needs of the least of their brothers and sisters—those who are hungry, thirsty, homeless, naked, sick, or imprisoned—it is like they are meeting His needs (Matt. 25:31-46). Where are the Christians? Why are these needs not met? Did not Jesus Himself love and dine with prostitutes?

Many successful, faith-based prostitution rehabilitation centers are found throughout large cities in the United States. The Walter Hoving Home, for instance, has homes in New York City, Las Vegas, and Pasadena, California. Metropolises like Chicago have many ministries for prostitutes. In the state of Tennessee, Nashville has Magdalene/Thistle Farms, Memphis has Moriah House, and even Knoxville has MercyMinistries. The Tri-Cities area<sup>2</sup> of East Tennessee and Southwest Virginia, however, has nothing but the jail system or probation for prostitutes. Johnson City's need for prostitution rehabilitation is just as real as the need of any larger city, but it is currently going unmet. According to Major Sean Carrigan of the Bristol, VA, police, "Bristol has the same crime as any other city nationwide, but to a lesser degree." Though there are not many official statistics that analyze the amount of prostitution that occurs in Johnson City, one need only type a few choice search terms into Google, or Craig's List. There are even

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<sup>1</sup> The word "trick" often refers to either the service solicited. It can also sometimes refer to the person soliciting the service from the prostitute.

<sup>2</sup> The Tri-Cities area typically includes the main cities of Kingsport, Johnson City and Bristol, but also often includes the smaller surrounding towns as well.

entire website pages specifically dedicated to advertisements for prostitutes.<sup>3</sup> On these websites, one will find a myriad of nude, faceless photos of women who describe themselves in degrading terms and explicitly state what they are willing to do—for a price—in the Johnson City area alone. Though few faces are shown, they often look disheveled and sunken, quite possibly the faces of women bound into the sex industry because of their addiction to substances. There are many ministries that have been established to heal this particular kind of brokenness, and though the Tri-Cities area also experiences this brokenness, it goes unhealed. For this problem to be addressed, Johnson City needs a faith-based rehabilitation home for women who desire to exit a life of prostitution. This proposed home's administrative processes should reflect those of already established successful rehabilitation homes, but would need to be adjusted to fit the needs of a smaller, more rural community.

### **An Unseen Reality: Establishing the Need**

In small rural areas of the country, many people are tempted to believe that “big city crimes” like prostitution are not prevalent. This is most certainly not the case for the Tri-Cities area. When asked if prostitution is a problem in Bristol, VA, Major Carrigan stated: “The downtown businesses have complained in the past that the prostitution in the downtown area, primarily on State St., was interfering with their normal operation. Female customers complained that they were harassed by men looking to pick up women.”<sup>4</sup> If there is demand, and men are actively seeking these women, then there must be a supply that is meeting this demand. Newspapers in Johnson City, Kingsport, and Bristol contain articles written about prostitution

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<sup>3</sup> Two such websites are [www.tricitybackpage.com/FemaleEscorts/](http://www.tricitybackpage.com/FemaleEscorts/), and [www.tennesseehookers.net/johnson-city-hookers](http://www.tennesseehookers.net/johnson-city-hookers), where the slogan is that one can “Date A Hoe Near You!”

<sup>4</sup> Major Sean Carrigan, e-mail message to Beth Schmid, November 27, 2012.

arrests.<sup>5</sup> Bristol appears to be most active in its police stings, sending female undercover officers to walk the downtown area and arrest Johns<sup>6</sup> after they solicit sex. Johnson City was also recently involved in a massive Mexican sex trafficking and cocaine distribution ring. “[F]ederal authorities arrested nine Hispanic men and women in May 2011 on a 13-count indictment for operating brothels and prostitution delivery services in Tennessee and Kentucky from 2006 to 2011.” This ring spanned from Nashville to the Tri-Cities area, and even up into Kentucky.<sup>7</sup>

Prostitution is a problem in the Tri-Cities area, yet there are currently no prostitution rehabilitation homes, or even specifically targeted ministries for this demographic in the area. When prostitutes are arrested, their only options are jail time and probation—there is no hope for rehabilitation within the community. Often, if a woman is arrested for prostitution and then released without going through any kind of rehabilitation, she will just go back to the career she has known and continue her illegal practice, only to be arrested again. Without rehabilitation, there is a cycle of never-ceasing arrests—costing taxpayers money that could be better spent elsewhere. If prostitutes had the option of going to a rehabilitation home instead of jail or probation, then crime rates would drop as women would discontinue this illegal practice, and the

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<sup>5</sup> Matthew Lane, "Three Sentenced for Roles in Prostitution Ring." Bristol Herald Courier 24 Feb. 2012. Web. 21 Nov. 2012. <<http://www.timesnews.net/article/9042845/three-sentenced-for-roles-in-prostitution-ring>>.

Brad Hicks, "Johnson City Women Plead Guilty to Prostitution Charges." Johnson City Press, October 27, 2011. <http://www.johnsoncitypress.com/News/article.php?id=95359>.

Robinson, Allie. "Undercover Sting in Bristol Nets Seven Charges Against Five Men." Bristol Herald Courier 4 May 2012. Web. 15 Nov. 2012. <[http://www.tricity.com/news/article\\_55f2abea-94ad-58ae-a6ac-70171a24dda9.html](http://www.tricity.com/news/article_55f2abea-94ad-58ae-a6ac-70171a24dda9.html)>.

Tennessee Bureau of Investigation and Vanderbilt Center for Community Studies. A Mixed Methods Research Study Presented to the Tennessee General Assembly: Tennessee Human Sex Trafficking and its Impact on Children and Youth. Nashville, TN: GPO, 2011.

"KPD Officer Cites Woman for Prostitution." Johnson City Press, September 13, 2011. Web. November 21, 2012. <<http://www.johnsoncitypress.com/News/article.php?id=94259>>.

Campbell, Becky. "TBI survey: At least 176 human sex trafficking cases in region." Johnson City Press, March 30, 2012. Web. November 21, 2012. <<http://www.johnsoncitypress.com/News/article.php?id=99340>>.

Smith, Rain. Kingsport police charge three N.C. women in online prostitution sting." Johnson City Press, July 6, 2011. Web. November 21, 2012. <<http://www.johnsoncitypress.com/News/article.php?id=92160>>.

<sup>6</sup> A "John" is a term commonly used to refer to the person who solicits a prostitute for sex.

<sup>7</sup> Matthew Lane, February 24, 2012.

illegal actions of the Johns would also be forced to decrease. Christians in the Tri-Cities area has the opportunity to save lives and help women out of a life of prostitution that is often not chosen out of desire, but out of necessity for survival.

### **Promising Precedents: Administrative Processes of Already Established Ministries**

Prostitution rehabilitation homes are found all over the world and offer promising precedents of administrative processes shown by already established ministries. Though all of them are unique in how they run their ministry, their administrative policies often have many overarching similarities. Many are fully immersive rehabilitation homes, homes in which the women in the program live with most of the staff members, typically staying on site for the majority of their enrollment in the program.<sup>8</sup> Ministries typically utilize street evangelism teams and the legal court system to find women who would possibly want to enroll in the program; they also offer a variety of services including biblical counseling, drug detox, development of work skills, and education.

Street evangelism is one way ministries identify women in prostitution and begin to develop relationships with them. Each ministry evangelizes differently. Often, a ministry will take a group of volunteers<sup>9</sup> out onto the streets and they will share the gospel in various ways with people—sometimes for several hours. “Strike teams” are sent to the streets and often given care packages to distribute. They hand out Bibles, evangelical message tracts, bags of food or hygiene products, business cards, and literature describing the ministry and its services. They also always carry with them a message of hope for a better life and healing through Jesus Christ. Ministries often try to meet the immediate physical needs of prostitutes in order to open up doors

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<sup>8</sup>Typically as the women progress through the programs. they earn more off campus privileges which can be used to go shopping, participate in a positive hobby, or visit family. Also, most ministries require enrollees to work off of campus in the career field they hope to pursue after completing the program.

<sup>9</sup>Often called a “strike team”

of conversation and relationships with the women. These relationships ultimately allow evangelists to meet the spiritual needs of the prostitutes.

Many ministries work with the local legal system to bring women to the rehabilitation home. Sometimes there will be legal advocates on staff at the ministry that will defend a woman charged with prostitution and will work with the judge to give the woman the option of serving time in jail or going to the rehabilitation home. If a ministry does not have legal advocates on staff, they will still often do in-jail ministry. It is safer for both for the prostitutes and the evangelists when the women are off of the streets. The company of loving evangelists can be very comforting to someone in jail. When people enter jail, it is often one of the lowest times in their life, but if prostitutes are told that there is hope for a future outside of jail, and are shown their worth in Jesus, then they will be much more receptive to the idea of leaving their lives in the sex industry behind. Jail ministries are effective, but when women are not in jail word of mouth is also an effective way to find prostitutes.

Ministries also find enrollees through a word of mouth approach. John Benton of the Walter Hoving Home, describes in his book, *One Lady at a Time*, how he and his wife Elsie found their first prostitute, Heidi. They asked a drug user if he knew of any prostitutes. Without hesitation, he called Heidi over. Benton and his wife ministered to her, and she eventually came to the home.<sup>10,11</sup> Word of mouth is an effective technique because it builds relationships with whole underground networks of people. A small base level of trust is also built if the contact is trustworthy or friends with the prostitute. Many women who have completed the ministry's program also tell other women about the rehabilitation ministry, and word is spread that there is help available, and that there is indeed a life after prostitution.

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<sup>10</sup> John Benton, *One Lady at a Time: the Story of the Walter Hoving Home*. Pasadena, CA: John Benton, 1992. Page 11.

<sup>11</sup> Heidi is now a missionary in the Caribbean with her husband and two children.

After a woman learns about the ministry's existence she then enrolls in the immersive residential rehabilitation program. Ministries vary in the length that women stay in the homes. Most programs are 6-12 months long.<sup>12</sup> They typically consist of three stages of residence: fully living in the home with a little outside contact, living on a campus but traveling to work, and staying with a host family while working. Ultimately, every ministry's goal is to enable the women to become fully independent of the home so that when they leave they are self-sufficient.

Ministries are financially supported in various ways. In order to enroll in the program at the Walter Hoving Home, women pay an entry fee of \$500 and raise \$500 a month in support to partially defray the \$1800 per month fee it costs the ministry to house each woman. They also hold special fundraising events like walkathons and raise money through donors.<sup>13</sup><sup>14</sup> The Refuge for Women, a rehabilitation home for women in Lexington, Kentucky, specifically develops church and local business relations to receive donations. They send out monthly newsletters to communicate the happenings of the ministry and to remind people/organizations/businesses of their need of funds. The Refuge for Women also plans events that raise funds and awareness.<sup>15</sup><sup>16</sup> Women living at The Refuge also make jewelry that the ministry sells on their website. Others ministries are funded by different grants, government agencies, private donors, profits made by selling products made by the resident women; most often, a ministry uses a combination of all of these.

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<sup>12</sup> For example: the Refuge for Women's program consists of nine months of living in the home and the last three months of the program are spent living in a transitional living arrangement. This transitional living can be either with a host family or independent.

Refuge for Women. Not Entertainment: The Sex Industry and the Path Out. Page 7. 2012. Print.

The Walter Hoving Home has a six month and a twelve month program.

"About Us." Walter Hoving Home. N.p., n.d. Web. 22 Oct. 2012. <<http://walterhovinghome.org/about-us/>>.

<sup>13</sup> Donors often include individuals, churches, and corporations.

<sup>14</sup> "Frequently Asked Questions." Walter Hoving Home. N.p., n.d. Web. 22 Oct. 2012.

<<http://walterhovinghome.org/frequently-asked-questions/>>.

<sup>15</sup> Three major events are currently planned for the year 2012.

<sup>16</sup> Refuge for Women. Ministry Overview. Sept. 2012. Print.

Ministries provide holistic rehabilitation programs that involve many aspects of counseling: emotional, spiritual, physical (drug detox and healthy lifestyles), and career. Biblical counseling is necessary when ministering to women coming out of prostitution, because so many wounds need to be addressed and healed. The women also need to learn biblical principles and gain a firm grasp on the Bible so that they are able to better combat all of the emotional scarring that comes from a life in prostitution. The Walter Hoving Home requires its residents to complete a 12 step program in order to graduate after which they work for four months at an outside job while still under the care and supervision of the home. The Walter Hoving Home's curriculum takes a holistic approach to counseling. It not only tells women that there is hope, but shows them how to achieve a better life for themselves. The curriculum strives to give them tools to thrive, rather than simply helping them to just get by. The Refuge for Women has another, similar approach. They have a list of six core areas of wellness they focus on when ministering to women: vocational, spiritually, physical, financial, emotional, and relational. They incorporate things like support groups, exercise, a Bible 101 class, career counseling, debt resolution, GED programs, and much more.<sup>17</sup> Though the Walter Hoving Home and the Refuge for Women are completely unrelated to one another, their programs are very similar in their holistic nature. This program approach seems to be the norm among the most successful and healthy rehabilitation homes.

**Bluegrass, the Bible Belt, and “Bless Her Heart”: How a Smaller Scale Ministry in the Tri-Cities Area Would Need to Differ from a Big City Ministry**

Smaller communities present different communal needs and ministerial problems than those of larger communities. Far fewer people live in the Tri-Cities area than there are in the cities in which most prostitution rehabilitation centers are found. According to the United States

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<sup>17</sup> “Ministry Overview” The Refuge for Women

Census Bureau, the Tri-Cities' area population is approximately 157,600 people,<sup>1819</sup> which is about half of Lexington, KY's<sup>20</sup> population of 301,569 people, and over 52 times smaller than New York City's<sup>21</sup> population of 8,244,910 people. Rural communities are also very different from urban ones. Necessarily, a smaller scale ministry in the heart of the Bible Belt would look different from big city ministry. To help describe the ministry I envision, I will refer to my hypothetical Tri-Cities ministry as Thirza's Home.<sup>22</sup> I have chosen this name because Thirza means "she is my beloved" in Hebrew.

The differences between big city prostitution rehabilitation homes and Thirza's Home lie not only in population and demographic differences, but also in the very nature of prostitution in the Tri-Cities area. Major Carrigan suggests that prostitution in the Tri-Cities tends to operate in a smaller and more simplistic ways. Though the police have charged some men with pimping, he finds that prostitutes there usually act independently, whereas in larger cities it is more common to find larger operations and brothels. He also posits that much of the prostitution there goes

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<sup>18</sup> All Population statistics are based on the United States Census Bureau's estimate for 2011.

<sup>19</sup> Tri-Cities = Johnson City, TN: 63,815 + Kingsport, TN: 49,232 + Bristol TN: 26,803 + Bristol VA: 17,750 = 157,600

United States Census Bureau. "State & County QuickFacts: Bristol (city), Tennessee." 18 Sep. 2012 Web. Accessed November 18, 2012. <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/47/4708540.html>.

United States Census Bureau. "State & County QuickFacts: Bristol (city), Virginia." 18 Sep. 2012 Web. Accessed November 18, 2012. <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/51/5109816.html>.

United States Census Bureau. "State & County QuickFacts: Johnson City (city), Tennessee." 18 Sep. 2012 Web. Accessed November 18, 2012. <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/47/4738320.html>.

United States Census Bureau. "State & County QuickFacts: Kingsport (city), Tennessee." 18 Sep. 2012 Web. Accessed November 18, 2012. <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/47/4739560.html>.

<sup>20</sup> Lexington, KY is the home of the Refuge for Women rehabilitation home.

United States Census Bureau. "State & County QuickFacts: Lexington-Fayette, Kentucky." 18 Sep. 2012 Web. Accessed November 18, 2012. <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/21/2146027.html>.

<sup>21</sup> Home of the first Walter Hoving Home rehabilitation house; the other two are in Pasadena, CA and Las Vegas with populations of 138,101 people and 589,317 people, respectively.

United States Census Bureau. "State & County QuickFacts: Las Vegas (city), Nevada." 18 Sep. 2012 Web. Accessed November 18, 2012. <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/32/3240000.html>.

United States Census Bureau. "State & County QuickFacts: New York (city), New York." 18 Sep. 2012 Web. Accessed November 18, 2012. <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/36/3651000.html>.

United States Census Bureau. "State & County QuickFacts: Pasadena (city), California." 18 Sep. 2012 Web. Accessed November 18, 2012. <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/06/0656000.html>.

<sup>22</sup> Thirza means "she is my beloved" in Hebrew.

unmonitored because most of the transactions occur over the internet rather than on a street corner.<sup>23</sup> This is consistent with many of the websites that advertise for prostitutes in the Tri-Cities area.

Most of the programs and administrative processes used by larger ministries could be replicated by Thirza's Home, including the strong relationship with the local authorities. Working with the local legal system would provide for the most resources and be the best outlet for informing women about the program. Though the ministry's staff would probably be too small to support a legal advocate for women charged with prostitution on staff, Thirza's Home should still develop good relations with the local judges and police officers. It would be crucial to the ministry's success and most efficient in reaching as many women in prostitution as possible if graduation through Thirza's Home's program was available as a viable alternative to jail time or probation for some women.

The number of residents in the house would be necessarily more limited than the amount of women living in larger rehabilitation homes, because there are fewer prostitutes in the Tri-Cities area and because the physical space of the home will most likely be limited. It is also difficult to initially furnish a larger facility, so a more limited number of residents would be preferable. In no way could Thirza's Home support the 62 woman capacity of the New York branch of the Walter Hoving Home; an initial housing capacity of five women is much more feasible for an area as small as the Tri-Cities, but the house could contain as many as ten women at a time depending on need and the availability of staff and volunteers.<sup>24</sup>

Because it will be a smaller scale ministry, Thirza's Home's staff would have to look a little different than the staff of most large ministries. The staff would have to be mostly volunteer

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<sup>23</sup> Major Sean Carrigan, November 27, 2012.

<sup>24</sup> Erica Carter, e-mail message to Beth Schmid, October 20, 2012.

and contain very few paid staff members. To cut down costs and to provide for better personal service to the women, a few staff members would live in the home with the women.<sup>25</sup> This allows for more intentional discipleship, for the staff to be available at all times, and for the women in the program to watch the staff members live out Christian lives and hopefully follow their example. Some ministries have men on staff, and some are fully staffed by women, but an all female staff is ideal. Often women in prostitution have strong aversions to men because they have been hurt by them. There are also personal and spiritual boundaries that men and women should not cross with one another unless they are married to each other. An all women staff would ensure more emotional safety for the women and they would be able to bond more deeply with one another. The Walter Hoving Home only hires from within to allow for two main things: for the women graduating the program to have an opportunity to work in ministry, and mainly because staff members who have been through the program and have had similar life experiences to the residents and can provide empathy and understanding that few others can.<sup>26</sup> As this would be the first ministry of its kind in the area, however, it would be impossible to hire from within for the first year as the ministry would not have any graduates yet; but as Thirza's Home will be working with and keeping in close contact with other prostitution rehabilitation ministries around the country, opportunities for hiring graduates of those programs will probably be available. If possible, it would be good to have a balance of hiring from within and hiring from without, this allows for both graduates of the program and people who feel called to prostitution rehabilitation ministry to follow what God has called them to do.

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<sup>25</sup> The other staff members will come from the outside. This could include volunteers who come just to spend time with the women or to help around the house with cooking/cleaning etc. or it could include outside specialists who only come on site for specific sessions with the women. An example of an outside staff member could include a medical specialist who makes special visits to check up on the women's physical health.

<sup>26</sup> Carter, Erica. "Physical Address." Message to Beth Schmid. 20 Oct. 2012-Present. Email.

Fundraising for the ministry would have to be examined from a Southern Appalachian lens of cultural understanding. Elaborate parties or black tie banquets would not raise money in Eastern Tennessee/Southern Virginia. They are not often held in the Tri-Cities community, and they would not have a high revenue generation. A similar event that could be held in the Tri-Cities area however is a community dinner. This dinner could be held at local churches or, in order to open it up even more to the general public, in town halls or community centers. Past popular dinner events include: spaghetti, potluck, and bean dinners. Though these dinners would obviously not raise enough funds to sustain the ministry, they would be raising the public's interest in, knowledge of, and awareness of the ministry. The women in the program<sup>27</sup> could present a short testimony of what God is doing in their lives since coming to Thirza's Home. Another fundraiser that could be very effective is some kind of annual festival centered around Bluegrass music and possibly some interspersed contra dancing. Bluegrass music is a historic staple in East Tennessee and all through Southern Appalachia, and many people enjoy Bluegrass festivals and events, so an annual event would make a fine addition to a list of fundraisers.

Another way to raise funds is through a tuition cost to the women in the program. Many ministries choose to offer their services to the women in the program for free. The Walter Hoving Home, however, requires the women to raise \$500 a month to help defray the cost of living at the home.<sup>28,29</sup> As a smaller scale ministry in a smaller more rural community, Thirza's Home would need to raise money whenever possible, so it would need to employ the Walter Hoving Home's method of residential payment. By raising this money, residents feel a sense of ownership in their rehabilitation and dignity from contributing to the ministry. They are no longer the "problem" of society, but are contributors to a ministry that is changing lives.

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<sup>27</sup> Or eventually the graduates of the program

<sup>28</sup> Refer to page 8.

<sup>29</sup> "Frequently Asked Questions." Walter Hoving Home

Committing to pay/raise money also weeds out the women who simply want to get out of jail, rather than the ones who truly desire to change. People are also more likely to take a program more seriously when they are personally invested in it.<sup>30</sup> If the women have to raise funds or pay to remain in the ministry, then a teaching opportunity is presented that allows the ministry staff to show the women how to balance their books and manage their money effectively. It provides a great real life example for the women as they learn about how to independently manage their money.

Though the Tri-Cities area is small, it is part of the “Bible Belt” and has a high church per capita ratio. Take for example, Johnson City. In downtown Johnson City, in approximately one square mile, one can find over seventeen churches, all meeting in different buildings.<sup>31</sup> Within that square mile, three young churches meet every Sunday morning on the same corner in different buildings.<sup>32</sup> Because of this high church concentration and their location downtown, there is the potential for a lot of church involvement and support. Thirza’s Home could get volunteers from these churches, and hopefully do some fundraiser events with them. If Thirza’s Home could be an interdenominational ministry that allowed for church goers of different denominations to work together in pursuit of the Gospel, then the body of Christ in the Tri-Cities area would become more unified, thus helping the community in general to be more unified.

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<sup>30</sup> This point is mostly drawn from the sociological perspective concerning group commitment developed by Rosabeth Kanter. Kanter postulated that there are 6 primary ways groups get people to commit: investment, renunciation, mortification, communion, sacrifice, and transcendence. These tactics are found, even if only inadvertently, in most groups in the world—whether that be a church, a high school football team, a cast in a play, or in an extreme form, a cult.

Rosabeth Kanter Moss, *Commitment and Community; Communes and Utopias in Sociological Perspective*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1972. Print.

<sup>31</sup> Bethel Lutheran Church, Calvary Chapel of Johnson City, Christ Community Church, Downtown Christian Church, East Ridge, First Church of God, First Presbyterian Church, First United Methodist Church, Friendship Baptist Church, Grace Temple Church, Locust Street Church of Christ, Munsey Memorial United Methodist Church,

United Methodist Johnson City, Redeemer, St. John's Episcopal Church, Sojourn, St. Paul African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church

<sup>32</sup> Sojourn Church, Redeemer, and East Ridge all meet on the corner of E. Main Street and S. Roan Street in Johnson City, TN.

Because the ministry would be small, it would need to rely on the support of local churches. Co-dependence amongst Christians is an action that embodies what it means to be the Body of Christ—it tears down walls of division, and edifies the church.

How women find out about the ministry would need to be a little different as well. Street ministry would not be as crucial to Thirza's Home as it is in other ministries because there are not as many street-walking prostitutes in the Tri-Cities area. According to Captain Maynard Ratcliff of the Bristol, Virginia, police, identifying street-walking prostitutes is more difficult to identify there because they look like average women and are identified by Johns only because the women stay in the same place in downtown Bristol for long periods of time.<sup>33</sup> He does, however, mention that often, police officers know street walkers by name, and when they are out patrolling the downtown area they let the women know that they should go home since they will not get any business with him patrolling in a marked car.<sup>34</sup> Developing a good relationship with the local legal system would be beneficial for Thirza's Home, but they should learn from the mistakes of ministries that have closed like Hope House in Allentown, PA. Hope House relied solely upon the police and judiciary system for their residential referrals. When the referrals for women ceased, one would hope that it was because there was no longer any need—that women had stopped prostituting themselves. In the article "Lack Of Referrals Forcing Hope House To Shut Its Doors," Jeffrey G. Fleishman, writer for the newspaper *The Morning Call*, postulates that the real reason the police stopped referring women was not because there were no women to refer, but that the police had shifted their attention and stopped pursuing women.<sup>35</sup> If Thirza's Home relied solely upon referrals from the police, and never employed any of the other means of

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<sup>33</sup> Major Sean Carrigan, November 26, 2012.

<sup>34</sup> Captain Maynard Ratcliff, November 26, 2012.

<sup>35</sup> Jeffrey G. Fleishman, "Lack Of Referrals Forcing Hope House To Shut Its Doors." *The Morning Call* 20 May 1986. Web. 14 Nov. 2012.

<[http://articles.mcall.com/1986-06-20/news/2519998\\_1\\_juvenile-prostitutes-hope-house-arrests](http://articles.mcall.com/1986-06-20/news/2519998_1_juvenile-prostitutes-hope-house-arrests)>.

finding residents that other ministries use, then it would most likely be forced to shut down just as Hope House did.

### **Streams of Living Water: A Conclusion**

Nelly's story can be concluded in a number of ways. It could end with her overdosing after one night's usual consumption of the crack cocaine she received as payment from a trick. It could end with her being arrested for prostitution and drug use, doing time in jail, and then returning to prostitution and drug use after being released. A happy ending is possible however. After being arrested, Nelly could be referred to Thirza's Home by a judge, and after being ministered to in the holding cell by some volunteers from Thirza's Home, she accepts. Though the yearlong rehabilitation is difficult, it is more rewarding than Nelly could have ever anticipated. She learns renews her relationship with Jesus, quits her drug habit, and through discipleship, individual searching, and biblical counseling, she learns that she is God's cherished daughter, and experiences emotional healing. After graduating the program and receiving career coaching, she is able to find a job first working with Thirza's Home, then with a Christian preschool, and then as an elementary school teacher. After proving to social services that she is capable of caring for her children, Nelly is given custody of Carrie and Jackson, and is able to be a mother to them once again. Because of Thirza's Home, she is able to get back on her feet again, and experiences the transforming love of Christ.

When asked about the rate of prostitution was, Major Carrigan said that it was difficult to measure in part because prostitutes will not turn themselves in, so unless an arrest is made, the crime often goes "unchecked." When asked if the police was proactively pursuing escort service websites for leads on prostitution, Captain Maynard Ratcliff stated that he had not ever thought to use the internet in searching for prostitutes. It is no wonder that when asked if he thought there

was a problem with prostitution in the area, he replied that he did not. Police officers should not be considered incompetent in any way, indeed, one major reason they are not proactively pursuing women in prostitution is because they are too overloaded with work. The number of complaints they respond to that require police action have risen by almost 10,000 complaints from 1999-2011,<sup>36</sup> yet the number of officers has decreased by 11 from 1999-2010.<sup>37</sup> With police officers spread too thinly, it is clear that the amount of help needed for women in prostitution cannot come from the police. Both Major Sean Carrigan and Captain Maynard Ratcliff stated in their interviews that they did not believe that there was enough prostitution to warrant a rehabilitation home ministry.<sup>38</sup> On the other hand, I posit that if only one woman can be helped by this ministry, then it will be worth it. If only one woman's story could end like Heidi's who became a missionary—resurrected from the deadness that comes with prostitution and now gives new life to people by sharing her experiences with Jesus. Jesus Himself used only one woman to reach an entire village when He revealed Himself as Living Water to a Samaritan woman drawing water from a well in John 4—a woman whom many scholars describe as the village prostitute. Jesus found worth in ministering to only one woman, even when His own disciples doubted His faith in her. How wrong they must have felt when because of this one woman's testimony of her life-changing encounter with Jesus, her whole village came rushing to see Jesus. Because the kind of prostitution in the Tri-Cities area looks different from the kinds found in the large cities that have successful prostitution rehabilitation homes, a different kind of ministry is needed. A ministry like Thirza's Home could be the spark necessary to ignite a wildfire of change in the Tri-Cities area—a home where prostitutes with stories similar to Nelly can know that they are truly *God's* beloved.

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<sup>36</sup> Exact numbers are: 14,402 in 1999 to 24,135 in 2011.

<sup>37</sup> 62 officers in 1999 to 51 officers in 2011.

<sup>38</sup> Major Sean Carrigan, November 27, 2012.