

## A Report from Arts for Relief and Missions

### Outreach

This past year was another year of exhibitions, and additionally, the completion of test marketing of the Chapel Gallery plan in a storefront in Mount Dora, Florida. As we approached the October Craft Festival, one of the 2 largest events in Mount Dora that have both drawn approximately 300,000 visitors, we discussed the possibility of renting the storefront for the weekend of the festival. The owner wanted the full \$2000 rent for the event which we declined, but later he approached us with a minimal fee request and we accepted the offer. Upon acquiring paintings from Tallahassee, we brought everything directly to the store at 144 W 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue the night before the festival opened.

After the Craft Festival, we discussed the possibility of staying on through Christmas as it was high season in Mount Dora. We were also contacted by a representative of the Mustard Seed Foundation who asked us to submit an application for grant funds as they wanted to participate with us in this outreach.

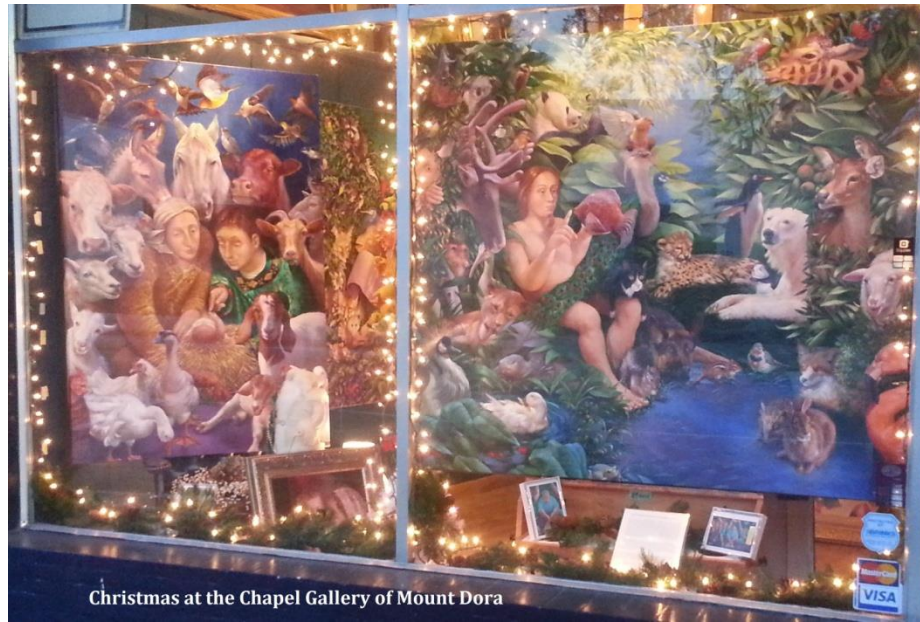


Ed began holding services on Sunday mornings, and a few people came in and visited the services several times. What we began to see was the day-to-day workings and the responses of the visitors to the display of all the biblical paintings with their texts. We participated in the Mount Dora art walks, and stayed open past the normal shop hours to attract couples who were on their way to dinners. Many times as we tried to lock up, people would peer into the windows until we reopened the store and turned the lights back on. At times we stayed past 10 pm.



The beginnings were truly humble as the owner would allow us there on the condition that his “for rent” signs remained in the windows, and no nails were placed in the walls, the paintings would have to stand on chairs. Eventually he allowed us to remove the signs, and with decorations for Christmas, and hanging pictures, the store actually began to appear more inviting.





The response in general amazed us. We had no money for advertising. We were not listed on the art walks as we were not officially there. We simply hung balloons and put out wine and cheese at the art walks and the people came in, staring at the biblical paintings. Sometimes we met Christians who were so thrilled we were there, they committed to pray for the outreach. Other times, and more often, we met "dechurched" Christians who expressed a cautious interest in becoming involved with worship on Sundays. They were drawn by the personal contact, by our genuine warmth and our commitment to biblical inerrancy.

What excited us the most was the daily contact with unbelievers, some of whom were gripped by the imagery. One event is particularly worthy of retelling:

While preparing for a Friday Art Walk, a group of sweet teenage girls came in from a rehab center in Kissimmee. One of them began to ask me questions which were sparked by all the biblical paintings lining the walls. Their questions let me know that they had very vague ideas about the Bible, but must have heard something at some time in their young lives. In the midst of my answers about the paintings, one teen interrupted me and asked, "Are you, like, a God Person?" Yes, I am. "Really!! I always wanted to meet one! Can I, like, write you or something? I always wanted to meet a God Person! I have so many questions. Could you, like, answer my questions?" Is that ok? Can I, like, write you?" This girl never stopped hugging me until she left the shop. They were attended by a man who was one of the directors at the rehab center to whom I offered to teach the girls how to draw. He said they would love it and he would bring them back. Apparently all of them were in the foster care system, now in drug and alcohol rehab. The teen girl I spoke with, who I thought was about 16, had a mother in prison, and was raised by a brother, also now drug addicted. Somehow she ended up in the care of this facility. It turned out this very suburban, middle-class looking girl was all of 13 years old. I was stunned at the presence of God in the room, and so grateful we were here to try to

capture these young hearts for Jesus. This chance meeting resulted in subsequent letters until the young girl went to live with her father.

We had many paintings photographed by a professional photographer with a shop a few blocks away, and made canvas giclees of several paintings. We built a center wall from door blanks from Home Depot and used those as walls for reproductions. We found a heavy shelf for \$25 and put our cards and prints on it and stayed through the Art Festival in early February.



By which time we had experienced 4 months and 2 festivals for our research on the project. The outreach impact was extremely successful: We conducted Sunday morning Bible fellowships in the gallery. Rosemarie had many conversations that finally resulted in leading the owner of the property to Christ.

Our last day there, a Sunday, felt like a triumphal recession of sorts, as many of the people who had regularly come to see us, one Latino family with 3 little boys, as well as many others, happened to come by as we were beginning to assess how we would dismantle everything. Ed sang worship songs and customers came in the door to listen as the “regulars” gathered around. The Mount Dora Chapel Gallery was a remarkable and wonderful test of ARM’s vision for marketplace ministry.

Our discussions for a permanent location have been ongoing with a couple different organizations who have expressed the need for a carefully planned prototype of a marketplace ministry concept that can actually be a sort of franchise for church planters looking for a way to reach a community. One of the heads of these organizations discussed how in their area of Washington DC there were 5 large church campuses, all of them at one point had closed, at the same time. Not only was this a stunning display of the Church being out of touch with the local community, it struck the organization’s leaders that we are not reaching the culture through churches the way we once did. They concluded that

there must be a new and innovative way to do it. When they saw our Chapel Gallery plan, the leaders of the organization saw it as a method of accomplishing just that, and have since been in dialogue about how and where to do such a project.

### **Humanitarian**

The preparation for the extended ministry of the gallery location has necessitated the development of reproductions and images for licensing. It is these licensed products that we anticipate to be the long-term provision for the humanitarian needs that are so prevalent all around us. In addition to securing professional photography of all the paintings, a new card line, beginning with 15 images, was produced with a new Chapel Gallery logo kindly donated by graphic artist, Vanessa Zein-Elden.

### **Prayer**

Ongoing has been the ministry of prayer that goes on weekly for a group of artists and musicians in different locations around the world. While some prayer ministry is accomplished in this way, there is also much done via phone or in person, and much of our ministry is purposeful in the use of the Biblical Counseling training that we have been committed to over the years.

### **Preparation**

The year of preparation points to a coming year of implementing the plans that have been so long in the making. Having lived in Chicago and now Florida, I can compare it to the difference in construction in the two areas. Florida, being essentially a swamp, does not have buildings multiple stories high nor with basements that consume much of the cost of the structure. I recall walking for months past a construction site in downtown Chicago where it appeared the only thing happening was the digging of an ever-deepening hole. Suddenly the iron girders started appearing and then the face of the building, until relatively quickly a high rise emerged from this ever-deepening hole. Artists are people of vision and people of passion who have seen the structures begin to emerge on the horizon where once there was a huge hole in the ground. We look toward 2015 awaiting the “high rise” and all for which we have planned, asked and prayed.

Thanks for standing with us under construction!

Rosemarie

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