

PRISON CRUSADE IMPACTS LANCASTER COUNTY PRISON

Reported by Nelson W. Martin, Director, Support for Prison Ministries (SFPM)

Sounds of singing echoed throughout the Lancaster County Prison (LCP) second floor recently. Enthusiastic Bible teachers engaged inmates in challenge and dialogue. Prayers and tears were shared around tables between volunteers and inmates.

These things happened at the first ever prison crusade within the walls of LCP held during April and early May. Gospel Express Prison Ministry teams and local volunteers received permission from Warden Vincent Guarini to go into four pods (housing units) and present the Gospel in song and word to about two hundred inmates. SFPM Chaplain Al Huber and other staff chaplains helped in many ways during this special event.



PART I Saturday, April 14. Forty volunteers (28 men and 12 women) met at Landis Valley Mennonite Church for a morning of orientation. Ron Yoder, from Gospel Express Evangelistic Teams, led the time of training about prison ministry, assisted by Nelson Martin and Al Huber. Volunteers were divided into four groups to accompany the Gospel Express New Creation team as they sang and shared at LCP Saturday afternoon and evening.

At each of the housing pods (three men's and one women's) the team sang for about 45 minutes, followed by a message by Ron Yoder. Inmates were urged to receive Christ and also request prayer for needs they had. Volunteers moved among the inmates, talking, listening and praying.

Invitations were also distributed inviting the same inmates to attend a one day "Bondage to Freedom" seminar. This is a life-changing teaching about broken relationships, rejection and forgiveness that has been used in many prisons throughout the United States.



New Creation Team bus parked outside Lancaster County Prison

One man I talked to on Saturday said, with tears, "I need lots of help. One week ago today, I was released from LCP after serving my time. I got drunk on Sunday, got in trouble with my family, and was back in prison by Monday." We believe many lives were impacted by this special Saturday event. Dwayne Mullett, Gospel Express Co-Director, told volunteers, "I believe God's Kingdom was advanced during these ministry times at LCP. The truth of God's word was shared with men and women who have made wrong choices. Being exposed to God's word gave opportunity for decisions that were life-giving."

PART II

Monday to Wednesday, April 30 to May 2.

Dwayne Mullett gave leadership to the crusade. Bondage to Freedom teachers were Lloyd Gingerich, Dave Esh, Steve and Dorcas Stutzman, and Melvin Kuepfer. The same volunteers returned to the four pods for an in-depth seminar. I was with Team B whose instructor was Lloyd Gingerich. He engaged the men well, sometimes laughing with and involving them in “interviews” or acting out stories. Other times he was serious and reflective as he shared about his walk of faith and the power found in Jesus Christ.

The first session on broken relationships began with emphasis on how Jesus and the truth can set all people free. Examples were given of how lust, fear, anger, and abuse lead to so many broken relationships. A paper was distributed with a drawing of a man in terrible shape - all weighted down and being crushed in life by problems. The second page showed the same man letting all his burdens at the cross and the joy and freedom that he experienced. A man at my table exclaimed “Wow. Just last week a counselor told me I must come to the end of myself. . . Give up my wrong ways before it is too late. When I saw that drawing of the man weighted down and the sign at his feet ‘Come to the end of yourself before it’s too late’ I knew that was a message for me.”



Monday, April 30
Gospel Express volunteers gather in LCP.

Session two highlighted Rejection. Stories were shared about how roots of sin and bitterness grow and follow persons through life. Lloyd said, “People reject others because of the hurt they have received. Hurting people hurt others. It can be a never ending cycle.” He also challenged, “Don’t play the comparison game. You will always lose at that game.”

The last session of the day used many Bible verses about Forgiveness. After some teaching, there was time for volunteers to talk to, pray with, and guide inmates in asking forgiveness from God and seeking forgiveness from those who wronged them. This was a time of struggle for some, and peace for others, as they dealt with many problems and situations that have marred their lives and led to pain and incarceration.

A highlight for me was the conclusion of the seminar when a graduation certificate was given to each person who completed the “Bondage to Freedom” course. I had the privilege of reading each of the names of about 50 guys as they came forward for their certificate. There was much shouting, clapping and hugging as these men realized they completed something. Many had been touched in a new way by God’s power. Their lives can be different. **MAY THAT BE A REALITY, DURING THE REMAINDER OF THEIR TIME IN PRISON AND THEN AS THEY RETURN TO THEIR HOMES AND COMMUNITIES.**

Inmates respond: The following are a sampling of notes received by the chaplains and/or Warden after the Gospel Express crusade at LCP.

- I received healing and forgiveness. I got that stuff off my back and gave them to God. He is great.
- I was told by men who have been in and out of this prison for years that this is the first time a fellowship/gathering like this was held. It was very beneficial for all.
- The feeling on the block was awesome. The Holy Spirit was definitely with us. I now have renewed hope.
- Thanks. Thanks. They helped us with our addiction and sin problems.
- The Word of God was shared, opening my eyes to the light of God. I will remember this all my days.
- To me personally, this was the best experience in my life.



Support for Prison Ministries ANNUAL BENEFIT AUCTION

October 26 & 27, 2007 at Farmersville Auction Grounds

Friday Evening:

4-7 P.M. Chicken Barbeque (Eat in or take out)

5:00 P.M. Auction of quality merchandise, hardware, flowers, gift certificates, Winross trucks and collectible toys, and a big selection of meats and groceries.

Saturday:

6 A.M. Delicious Pancake and Sausage Breakfast

8:30 A.M. Auction begins with quality merchandise for home, farm, and business, including framed pictures, quilts, hand-crafted items, pedal tractors, and theme baskets.

Our auction goal is to clear \$80,000 after expenses, to be shared with LANCASTER COUNTY PRISON and YOUTH CENTER CHAPLAINCY PROGRAMS, EXIT (Ex-Offenders in Transition), FREEDOM GATE, TRANSITION TO COMMUNITY and WE CARE PROGRAMS.



MANY VALUABLE GIFT CERTIFICATES
From area businesses for food, lodging, professional and home services.

HOME MADE FOODS AVAILABLE THROUGHOUT SALE



Donations of quality merchandise and gift certificates are needed. Volunteers needed to help prepare for and work on Auction Day. Attention Quilters: We have tops to be quilted if you can help. For more information, call: Nelson Martin (717) 625-0232, Glenn Hoover (717) 569-2475 or Cliff Martin (717) 336-6411.



HELP MAKE THEME BASKETS FOR ANNUAL BENEFIT AUCTION

We are looking for Individuals, Sunday School Classes, Small Groups...to donate theme baskets to be sold at our annual benefit auction October 26 & 27.

_____ Yes I/we would like to donate a theme basket!

Be creative!!

We will send you more information and details once we have this coupon.

_____ Not feeling creative but here is a financial donation for SFPM to create a theme basket. Receipt will be sent for donations.

Cut out coupon and mail to SFPM, P.O. Box 134, Lititz, PA 17543
Or email us at info@supportforprisonministries.org

Your Name: _____ Email: _____



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Check out our website for updated photos and information: www.supportforprisonministries.org

DIRECTOR'S REPORT: CALLED OF GOD **Nelson W. Martin**

I recently spoke at a dinner meeting for a local Rotary club. After sharing about what our chaplains do, the restrictive environment they work in daily, the high recidivism rates and how many persons fail when they get out of prison, one man asked "How can you find anyone to work for you as a chaplain?"

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My answer was that our chaplains and other staff feel called of God to minister to those who are incarcerated. They love people and have a heart to share what God is doing in their lives. I said the work and ministry inside the prison is not unlike that of a pastor who commits to leading and shepherding a church.

The circumstances, between a church on the outside and the church behind bars, are quite different. But hearts, needs and the power of the Gospel are the same for men and women anywhere.

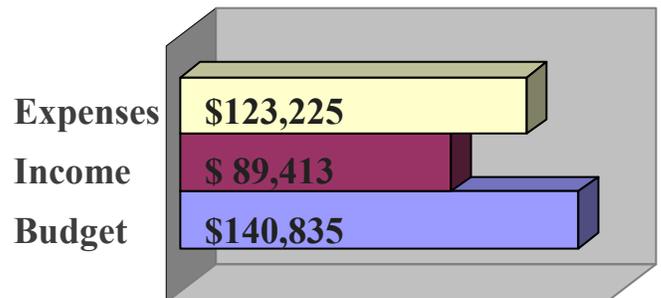


So wherever you and I serve, we can claim God's promise from Isaiah 55: 11, "So is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I (God) sent it."

FOCUS ON FINANCES

SFPM annual 2007 budget is \$338,000. Of this amount, about \$165,000 will be needed from contributions. As you can see in the financial graph, expenses stay fairly constant for chaplain salaries and programs throughout the year, while contributions are smaller during spring and summer months. Thanks for your gifts!

January 1- May 31, 2007



We are thankful for generous contributions we receive from:
Churches (offerings and/or annual budgeted amounts)
Businesses (regular donations and items for benefit auction)
Individual Persons (with a heart for those incarcerated)

An envelope is enclosed for you to be a partner with us. Receipts are sent for all contributions.