

When I Help With Prison Alpha

For the past two years, Support for Prison Ministries Chaplain's have coordinated numerous ALPHA classes inside the Lancaster County Prison. Inmates have been very involved in ALPHA and many lives have been impacted by God's touch. SFPM asked two area pastors, whose lives were also impacted, to share some reflections.

*Alpha
Teachers
Karl Steffy
and Charles
Deutsch in
LCP Chapel*



Charles A. Deutsch (Pastor of Discipleship & Outreach, Lititz United Methodist Church)

For the longest time, I never really associated the story of the sheep and the goats (Matthew 25:31-46) to my life or way of living. I've always assumed I was a sheep. I've always been a Christian – now I'm even a Pastor – and surely I'm a sheep, maybe I'm even better than that. I am a shepherd!

I can't imagine that my name is not in the Lamb's Book of Life! Think about it, I preach the Word, I instruct the congregation that they need to be out there "feeding the hungry, giving water to the thirsty, taking in strangers, clothing the naked, and visiting the prisoners." I mean, Lord, isn't it my job to teach and equip? Am I also to do it? I believe in the "priesthood of believers" and these tasks are to be the ministry of the laity. They need to do their part as messengers to those people out there. My job is visioning and leading from my ivory palace of the church. Do I have to get my hands dirty too?

That is the wonderful thing about ALPHA - learning about God in our lives, and sharing as ministers of the gospel the "Good News" that Jesus died for us. We all are to be His hands, His feet, and His voice in a world bent on its own destruction. "The harvest is great but the laborers are few." Therefore, we all need to get our hands dirty, to dig in up to our elbows and to reach out beyond the confines of the fine tapestries and beautiful sanctuaries of our churches to a world in need.

Through my short time as a pastor, I have had the

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Karl E. Steffy (Pastor, East Petersburg Mennonite Church)

When I help with prison ALPHA and lead a discussion group, or play my guitar and lead the singing, or correspond and make follow-up visits, or contact the men's families on the outside, I have the distinct awareness that Jesus, through his Spirit is still preaching good news to the poor, proclaiming freedom for the prisoners, giving sight to the blind, releasing the oppressed and announcing the year of the Lord's favor (Luke 4: 18). When I visit men in prison I am aware that, in a mysterious way, I am visiting Christ Jesus himself (Matthew 25:36). I find Christ in prison.

When I help with prison ALPHA, my heart is filled with compassion as I see the brokenness and the ravages of sin perpetuated from generation to generation through the fallen nature of man and society. In prison my heart is touched and thrilled as I see God's grace at work. I am amazed at Jesus' incredible power to bring light and hope to those living in the midst of darkness and despair. I well-up with emotion as the men sing their hearts out in worship to God. I am moved by their deep, simple and heartfelt prayers.

When I help with prison ALPHA, I realize anew that our human hearts are all the same, whether we're in prison or not. Our needs are the same. We all need God. We all need love. We all need forgiveness. We all need training and models of faithfulness. We all stand before Holy Love in both judgment and grace. The God who diagnoses our "sickness" is also the God who provides the cure. The God who accepts as we are, does not leave us as we are.

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Turning Point Ministers at Youth Center

Turning Point ministry was formed two years ago when a few of the staff at the Youth Intervention Center (YIC) and local pastors saw the need and opportunity to reach out to troubled



(left to right) Jose, Sammy and Charlie at entrance to YIC

teens in YIC. Through several meetings and prayer we came up with the name Turning Point because we want Christ to be the Turning Point in their lives. Our main focus is to evangelize and mentor at risk youth. We are a group of local churches that have teams who come in every Friday night to play basketball and share a short Bible message and testimonies. We never end the evening without offering an invitation for salvation and prayer.

Turning Point forms relationships with the youth during their stay at YIC. We have a few members of the teams come in during the week for one on one visits to share and answer any questions the kids might have about Christ. Most of the time we are there just to be an ear and show them that someone loves and cares for them no

matter what their situation may be. We also try to connect them with our youth groups when they are released to continue allowing Christ to work in their lives. These kids just need someone to stand with them, to show them love and encouragement, to tell them that they are worth something, and that God has a plan for their life. There is no such thing as a bad kid it is just bad habits and environments. We as the church need to stand with and pray for our youth. Through prayers God will continue to change lives.

I want to thank the staff and chaplains at YIC for their time and allowing us the privilege to come in and share the gospel of Christ. I would also like to thank the staff of Support for Prison Ministries for allowing us to share about Turning Point. I am always reminded of Isaiah 42:7 "To open blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from prison, and those who sit in darkness from the prison house."

Charlie Hess, Ephrata, PA

VISION UNDERGIRDDED BY ACTIVE BOARD

The ongoing work of SFPM is guided by a 10 member board from various churches. Their vision statement is "To assist the local church in the ministry of reconciliation to men and women involved with the criminal justice system." Their mission and purpose statement is:

- * To assist local pastors and ministry teams to gain prison access.
- * To provide chaplains to work with those within prison walls.
- * Network with reentry/aftercare ministries.
- * Provide training to local churches, community and interested persons.



*(Taken at recent board meeting)
(L to R) Warren Fox, Steve Martin, Glenn Hoover, Anthony Martin, Dwayne Sensenig, Kevin Hahn, Warren Hackman, Cliff Martin, Leon Roy Martin, and SFPM Director Nelson Martin, (Board member Randy Kline was absent)*

Strawberry Street House

**Anthony Martin, Lititz, PA,
Heart to Heart Ministry Volunteer and Board member of SFPM**

From a humble beginning of people feeling the call to reach out to troubled teens in Lancaster city, to a ministry today that reaches out to people of all ages in Lancaster and elsewhere, God continues to bless Heart to Heart Ministry with opportunity and laborers.

The use of the Support for Prison Ministries owned house at the corner of Strawberry and Woodward Streets in Lancaster, referred to as "Strawberry House" by those involved with Heart to Heart, continues to be a real blessing to our ministry. This house

serves as the hub for the various programs focusing on the Strawberry Street neighborhood as well as providing a central meeting place for ministry planning and board meetings. The house has provided the opportunity to have an annual Christmas caroling event in the neighborhood, as well as a summer chicken



545 E. Strawberry St. Lancaster

BBQ. In addition to these annual events, a weekly children's program, called Children's Heart to Heart, has proved to be very popular, drawing up to 30 children in an evening. Several other programs use the house as well, including a Monday night program for teen age girls and a Wednesday morning program for neighborhood women and ladies residing at Water Street Rescue Mission and Milagro house.

Elsewhere in the city, programs are operating at Manos, the Youth Intervention Center, Prescott House and the Fulton shelter. The Lord has shown the ministry in a very real way to "Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest."

(Continued from page 1...Charlie Duetsch)

privilege to be able to share my faith, in many different venues; however, I have found that the most rewarding, wonderful and vibrant experience in my life of ministry has been my involvement with Prison ALPHA! Probably more than any other part of my ministry, Prison ALPHA has made me aware of my own shortcomings and failures as a human being, and that at times I have been a goat! The text tells us that the only difference between the sheep and the goats is what they did and didn't do.

I feel privileged to call many of the men in the ALPHA group my friends and brothers in Christ. Prior to my involvement with Prison ALPHA, I think I would have been less than sympathetic to many of these same men. However, God in His graciousness has used this ministry to show me that I too am a sinner in need of the love of Christ, maybe at times even more than those behind the bars of a prison. I now realize that Christ is alive and well in all walks of life, and if I want to be like Christ, then I too must meet people where they are, no matter what. It's not for me to change them, but it's up to me to love them for who God made them to be.

(Continued from page 1...Karl Steffy)

When I help with ALPHA in prison, I am confronted, as a pastor, with the immense challenges that face men as they leave prison, and of the importance for churches to be aware of this. I am thankful for ministries like EXIT, Transition to Community, and Support for Prison Ministries, which can be avenues for individuals and congregations to equip themselves for reaching out to new believers coming out of prison. Many inmates are genuinely frightened to be released from prison. They are afraid of being sucked back into their former vices. Most have little or no family or social support, nor any living models of a mature Christian lifestyle. God is looking for caring churches who will lovingly welcome Christian men and women as they come out of prison and disciple them in Christ. There is a wide open door for churches to follow up outside of prison what ALPHA begins inside.



Karl leads worship at Alpha Prison session

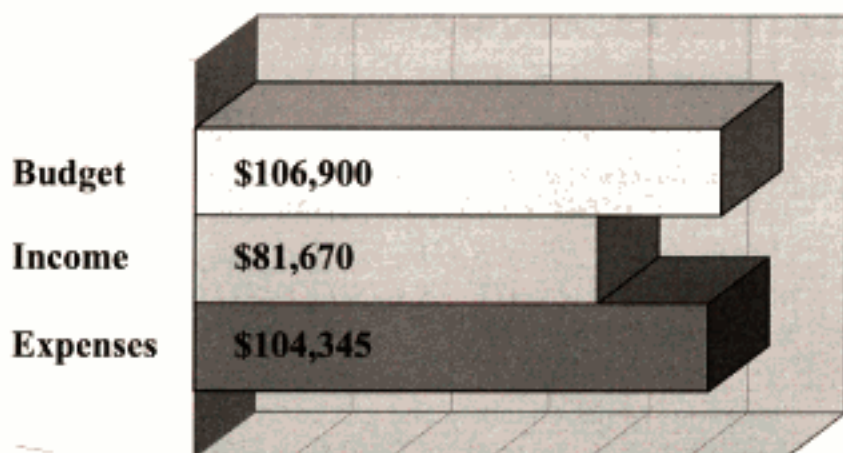


Focus On Finances

Our annual budget is \$285,000. Of this amount, about \$135,000 is anticipated from contributions. We are thankful for good giving so far this year, including some first-time churches, businesses and individuals.

As you can see from the chart, we receive more of our income toward the end of the year because of our October auction and strong year-end giving. Since our monthly expenses stay fairly constant for salaries and programs, we are thankful for regular giving that helps fund each month of the year.

January 1 - May 15, 2004



An envelope is enclosed for you to share a gift with us.
A receipt will be sent out for contributions.

Lancaster County Prison (LCP) Ministry Facts, Figures, and Testimonies

Following a recent Bible study, an inmate told the teacher *"Today I learned how to resist evil. I now understand the nature of temptation and how Satan plays with our minds. Since I am now a Christian, I will be free to say "No" to the devil."*

During the past year, about 2,200 Bible correspondence courses were completed by inmates.

The Chaplain's office staff handle about 1,200 requests/contacts from the inmate population each month. We are so thankful for multiple opportunities to sow spiritual seeds, nurture growth and rejoice in changes as lives are touched by God's power and presence.

Note from female inmate upon receiving a Bible from the chaplain: *"I've heard some stories of the Bible, but this is my first time ever reading it myself. I know God has forgiven me for the bad decisions I made in the past. Thank you so much for caring about me."*

Support For Prison Ministries

P.O. Box 134

Lititz, PA 17543

(717) 626-6301

Email: sfpm@4safe.com

www.supportforprisonministries.org

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PRISON MINISTRY HIGHLIGHTED AT NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER EVENT

Hundreds of persons gathered for many exciting prayer day events at Long's Park on Thursday, May 6. A lovely weather day, worshipful singers and anointed speakers and prayer leaders, made this a day to remember. Support for Prison Ministries was invited to join about 40 other area nonprofits for a ministry expo in a large tent. SFPM's display table and model prison cell were well received. Many persons asked questions, took literature and interacted with chaplains and board members present.

A highlight happened at the end of the day, as reported by SFPM Director Nelson Martin.

"After I had packed our displays and materials, a middle aged man walked up to me and with tears in his eyes, said, 'I want you to give a message to prison chaplains. Tell them to keep on doing their work.'

I'm sure they get discouraged and maybe don't feel like they are accomplishing anything. I am here to say that if only one life is changed by God's power it is worth it. I am one who was changed."

He went on to tell about his dysfunctional life, being in prison for many years, but a chaplain intervened and God changed him. He repeated that I was to give his message to chaplains and prison workers. He then turned and walked away. I don't know who he was (maybe it was an angel) but I was impacted by the message. I HOPE YOU ARE ALSO."



Chaplain Al Huber, Director Nelson Martin and Chaplain Isaías Maldonado at Prayer Day Expo



Friday Evening

4:00-7:00 PM Chicken Barbeque (*eat in or take out*)

5:30 PM Auction of quality merchandise, hardware, flowers, gift certificates, toys, and collectibles, meats and groceries

Saturday

6:00 AM Delicious Pancake and Sausage Breakfast

8:30 AM Huge Auction begins, with quality merchandise for home, farm and business.

Support for Prison Ministries ANNUAL BENEFIT AUCTION

October 22-23, 2004 at Farmersville Auction Grounds



Our auction goal is to clear \$65,000 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.

Donations of merchandise and gift certificates are needed. Are there any volunteers to make THEME BASKETS? Let us know.

For more information, call: Nelson Martin (717) 626-6301, Glenn Hoover (717) 733-7301 or Cliff Martin (717) 336-6411