

Prayer is the Key



In Christian ministry today (whether in congregations or specific assignments like prison ministries) many plans are put into place, many vision and mission statements are written, and many hours are spent in related tasks. In this newsletter, we want to acknowledge that no matter how worthy these goals are or how hard we may work at ministries, these efforts will be unsuccessful unless undergirded with prayer.

We are aware that various groups pray regularly for Support for Prison Ministries. Some are churches, small groups, and individuals. A businessman recently said "I pray for you everyday". A prayer group at Landis Homes (a retirement community in the Lititz area) meets weekly for prayer. Janice Hess, a Landis Homes employee and a volunteer chaplain at Lancaster County Prison (LCP) recently coordinated a visit to LCP for four of these prayer partners. Here is their story:

"We belong to a prayer group at Landis Homes who pray specifically for inmates at LCP. We were so glad to have an opportunity to tour that facility in September, 2003.

This was my first visit inside a prison. Up until this time, I had only seen pictures of inmates in a small dark cell behind iron bars. So I was pleasantly surprised when our tour guide brought us to the women's section, with light colored walls and a narrow window in each cell door. I did notice that there were no windows that one could see to the outside world.

We were able to go inside one cell whose two occupants were attending a chapel service. I was encouraged to see an open Bible on one of the cots and some Christian books on the table. One of the important tasks of Support for Prison Ministries, in addition to providing chaplains, is the distribution of Bibles, Christian books and Bible study courses.

The corrections officer on duty that day was pleasant as she answered our questions. She had 90 some women under her supervision. We could see that the women kept their cells and public area neat and clean.

During the tour of another part of the prison, we passed by a room where Chaplain Cody Hall was teaching a group of men inmates, preparing them for their soon sched-

uled release. Cody is directing Transition to Community, a Lancaster area ministry that provides a continuum of care to those being released from LCP.

As we entered each section of the massive prison, the tour guide could only proceed as someone in the main control room electronically unlocked the doors. We were impressed with the security that was maintained, as well as being aware that our walking through the facility was being constantly monitored by the control room. The clanging doors behind us gave a sense of finality to our visit.

We are so thankful that LCP is open to the ministry of the Gospel. We will continue to pray that many inmates will have a life changing experience while serving time. May God bless each worker there, especially the chaplains and Christian workers who minister to the spiritual needs of those incarcerated at Lancaster County Prison."

Written by Jeanne Miller, on behalf of Betty Denlinger, Elizabeth Hershey, and Stella Newswanger



Standing on steps of Lancaster County Prison, (l-r) Elizabeth Hershey, Stella Newswanger, Betty Denlinger, Jeanne Miller

Support for Prison Ministries thanks our partners for their prayers. We are challenged to be more diligent with praying, knowing that prayer is the key to success in ministry. A monthly prayer letter is mailed to a list of committed prayer partners. Access is also available to this prayer list on our website: www.supportforprisonministries.org.

God is faithful. He continues His work!

(Editor's Note) Last fall (2002) we featured a story about Kimberly Lane, who was approaching her time of release from Lancaster County Prison. Kimberly wrote then "While in prison, I returned to Jesus, my first love. When I leave prison soon, I'm taking the Lord home with me!" Faye Stauffer, women's chaplain at LCP, has kept in touch with Kimberly. We asked Kimberly to share more of her life's journey with us.

"I was surprised when Miss Faye asked me to write about what I've been doing since I got out of jail. God has really blessed me in more ways than I can count. The day I got out I went home to my mom's house. There was Kayla Rose, my youngest child who was born to me while I was in prison. She was now 18 months old and I had such a fear (false evidence appearing real) that my daughter wouldn't know that I was her mom. But that was one of the blessings God had in store for me. She knew who I was and started calling me "mom" the first day. And then Jon and Josh came home from school and they were ecstatic that I was home!



Kim with her family

Two weeks after my release I got a job at Giant on the Lititz Pike. I am still there, doing a split shift, house-keeper in the morning and salad bar at night. And little did I

know that God would be bringing my future husband to me. He was working in the deli and we were married in August 2003.

In October 2003 my grandmother passed away. That was a very sad time for me, but God again in His infinite wisdom had a plan. God (and my mom) have blessed me with my grandmothers house. And then the woman who lived across the street put her house up for sale and my mother and father bought it. Now they live across the street from me. That just brings to my mind a scripture in Romans 8:28 "All things do work together for good to them that love God and to them who are called according to His purpose".

God has also put on my heart to go back to school, so I started school in September 2003. I am studying to be an esthetician. God is truly amazing. And yes, I am still attending church at DOVE Christian Fellowship. **God is faithful! He continues His work!!"**

Kim (Lane) Plante



OUR WEBSITE IS NOW OPERATING AND GETTING LOTS OF HITS FOR INFORMATION. Check us out - give us any suggestions how we can make it more informative or helpful to you.



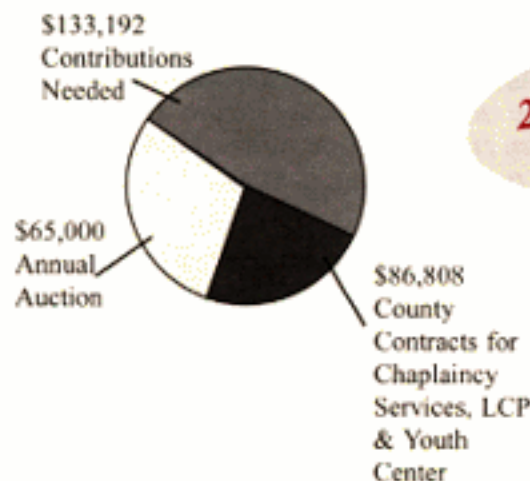
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Focus On Finances

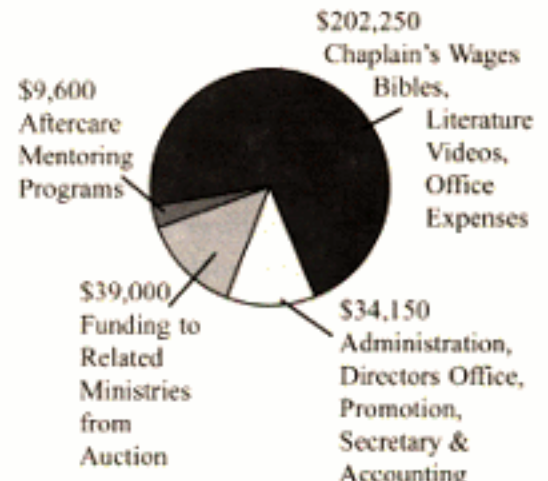
At their December 2003 meeting, the Support for Prison Ministries Board of Directors approved a budget for 2004 totaling \$285,000. Of this total, \$133,192 is needed from contributions. We are so thankful for the generous gifts receiving in 2003 and trust you will continue to share financially with SFPM.

Income



2004 Annual Budget - \$285,000

Expenses





Benefit Auction is a Success!

Hundreds of people attended the 20th annual Support for Prison Ministries Benefit Auction that was held Friday and Saturday, October 24 and 25 at the Farmersville Auction Grounds. Highlights of the day included the sale of many valuable gift certificates donated by area businesses, a huge and beautiful selection of quilts and wall hangings, a unique hand carved 3-D picture of an area farm that sold



Dave Landis (left) receives check for \$16,250 from Nelson Martin, SPPM director, for We Care's share of auction receipts.

for \$5,000, lovely theme and gift baskets, and paintings and crafts made by prison inmates. There was also the usual homemade food and fellowship that made this day a wonderful experience. Net receipts (after expenses) totaled \$64,531,

were contributed to these 6 prison ministries:

Lancaster County Prison: Has 7 paid chaplain staff and 12 regular chaplain volunteers that do Bible studies, counseling and distribution of Christian literature to inmates.

Lancaster County Youth Intervention Center: 1 full-time and 2 part-time chaplains that minister to juveniles, ages 10 - 17.

Transition to Community: Directed by Cody Hall, provides in prison training and aftercare ministry to inmates when released. Operates a reentry house program at 39 W. Vine St, Lancaster.

Freedom Gate: A halfway home for men located in Reading, PA. Provides housing, job placement, spiritual counseling and disciplined living setting.

Rivers of Living Water Ministries: Directed by ex-inmate Jim Newsom, a teaching ministry to prisons, schools, and churches.

We Care Programs: Based in Atmore, Alabama, provides chaplaincy services to a number of Alabama State Prisons. Sponsors faith based dorms and has extensive prison teaching and educational programs.



Since the SPPM annual auction began in 1984, over \$1 million have been contributed to prison ministry causes. Plan now to join us for the 2004 event to be held October 22 & 23.



Pray for this need:

The following note was received by one of our chaplains from a recently released inmate.

This is typical of hundreds of notes and requests for help that come regularly to the SPPM staff.

"Can you pray for me? I am not getting anywhere. I hurt. I need a job. I need friends. Please pray for me and maybe it will get better. I feel like I just circle around and around."



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DIRECTOR'S REPORT

WISE PEOPLE STILL SEEK JESUS

During the Christmas season that we just came through, I again heard the familiar statement *"Wise Men Still Seek Him"*. I was challenged to expand my horizons about this statement. Yes, wise men (tradition names them Caspar, Melchior, and Balthasar) did seek out Jesus and present Him with gifts. But there were wise women involved as well: The young Mary, mother of Jesus; Elizabeth, Mary's relative who bore John the Baptist; and Anna, the godly aged widow in the temple.

My challenge is this: Wise PEOPLE still seek Jesus. Men, women, teens, children . . . can still respond as when Jesus was born . . . to seek and worship Jesus . . . and to give to Him their lives in love and service. **May you and I be wise persons who seek after God's heart and follow Jesus in this new year of 2004.**



*Nelson W. Martin,
SFPM Director*

Prison Training Seminar

A two day **PRISON TRAINING SEMINAR**, co-sponsored by Support for Prison Ministries and We Care Programs, was held recently at Hinkletown Mennonite Church. Forty-three persons attended representing a wide range of prison ministry experience or interests. Speakers were Dave Landis, Nelson Martin, Jim Britnell, Cody Hall, Al Huber, J. R. Fisher and Nelson Zeiset.



As one participant reflected *"The seminar shared a lot of helpful information . . . I made new friends. It inspired us to press on in our callings"*. One speaker challenged the group *"Always remember that ministering inside a prison is a privilege, not a right."*

