

Lighting the Darkness

*A story about the Prison Ministry of
Al & Mary Ann Hocke, Lancaster, PA*



Al and Mary Ann Hocke

Pastor Al Hocke and his wife, Mary Ann, have been involved in prison ministry since 1988. They have been involved in a variety of ways including: minister visits, chapel services, worship leaders and Bible study teachers. As current volunteer chaplains they minister in theophostic/inner healing prayer ministry. Both had been in the optical field, which they left to follow God's leading. Mary Ann & Pastor Al were teaching part-time at a local Christian School and in 1993 founded the Neighborhood Church in Lancaster City. Their vision was to have a place where everyone, dressed any way, would be welcomed and cared for.

While this new church was coming together, they were introduced to this type of prayer ministry as well as teaching about the spiritual roots of diseases. As they began to question and search the scriptures about these things, God revealed the depth of the truth, power, and love that HE has to heal people as well as how much He desires to set them free. The most awesome changes began to happen as

they sat back and let Jesus speak to people and the Holy Spirit to show His power. The hardest part was learning to be quiet, not give their own counsel, and allow God's sheep to actually hear His voice. It is wonderful to see people's reactions the first time they hear from God themselves.

As Pastor Al pondered why the return rate in the prison was so high, and why inmates didn't change even though they were given good counsel sometimes over and over and by many different people, God began to answer these questions. They discovered that often counsel was given to the logical part of people's minds and even though they would understand these things, and could probably teach the facts themselves, it didn't make any impact in their actions. Their actions were determined in the sub-conscious, emotional part. This part is where all the lies, deceptions, filters, walls, and wounds reside, as well as the sanctified areas, and most importantly our hearts. Proverbs 23:7a says, "For as a man thinks in his heart, so is he..." James 1:8 says, "He is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways."

Even though many inmates have good intentions and a real desire to live a life that would please God, both in and out of the prison, often upon release the cares of the world would choke out the Word of God. Romans 12:2a

says, "and do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind..." On the door of the 2nd floor chapel at Lancaster County Prison is a poster with Galatians 5:1, "it is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery." While incarcerated many inmates come for prayer ministry. God is changing many strongholds (mindsets) and healing many broken spirits. The Chaplains have seen some stay free on the outside and if they do come back they testify that the areas where they received healing were not the areas that led to their return. The new choices point to other places that need renewal and they start there.

Seeing these victories at the prison, Pastor Al & Mary Ann began ministering this way in their church and teaching others how to hear from God and allow Him to change their hearts. As the end of 2004 God led them to leave their pastorate and begin "Freedom Ministry" full-time. Their vision is to continue ministering in the prison as well as offering this service to those not incarcerated. They also offer seminars to teach scriptural principles at various churches as well as train others to do so. It is exciting to see how God is using Al & Mary Ann to light the darkness that is in our prisons...and in our world.

Freedom Gate Ministries

Reading, PA



Junior Oriol
Freedom Gate Director

Freedom Gate held their 2005 Breakfast Banquet on February 12 at Weaver's Banquet Center in Adamstown. Junior Oriol shared updates from Freedom Gates programs, including ongoing plans for making the center an Independent Induction Center that networks with Teen Challenge Training Center of Rehrersburg, PA.

Resident Danny Tiderman gave a personal testimony of God's healing

work in his life. Guest speaker, Berks County Judge Scott Lash shared about prison ministry needs and opportunities for after care and rehabilitation of ex-inmates.

Freedom Gate is a ministry whose mission is to provide Christian aftercare support for ex-prisoners. This support would not only include food, clothing, and shelter but also a constant care environment where the ex-prisoner would receive practical counseling in all areas of life in order to become a responsible neighbor in the community.

SFPM has been sharing financial support through their Annual Benefit Auction. SFPM continues to wish Freedom Gate well as they endeavor to become an Independent Induction Center.

From the Board's View Point

by Steve Martin,
SFPM Board
Treasurer



Since joining the Board of Directors in 2003, I have been so amazed at the quality of staff that God has blessed us with. Their love for the inmates, their dedication to the ministry and their servant's hearts are a constant challenge and blessing to me. It's not easy or glamorous working with the men and women behind bars, but they do it with love and commitment.

Currently SFPM has 11 paid staff, (about 6 ½ full time equivalent). 8 of these work in the Lancaster County Prison (LCP), and 3 are at the Youth Intervention Center. In addition, 12 regular volunteer chaplains assist at LCP. These volunteers donate almost 100 hours per week of services.

Our 2005 Financial plan is \$317,250, an increase of 11% over 2004. Because of increasing prison ministry opportunities and availability of more paid chaplain time, the Board approved this faith budget. Currently our budget is being stretched, but we are trusting God to provide.

Thank you so much for your generous gifts in the past. We appreciate them more than you'll ever know. And please keep praying for our missionaries behind the bars.

Support for Prison Ministries Board Members

Leon Roy Martin, Chairman, Lititz
Glenn Hoover, Vice Chairman, Ephrata
Warren Hackman, Secretary, Newmanstown
Steve Martin, Treasurer, Womelsdorf
Warren Fox, Martindale
Kevin Hahn, Lititz
Randy Kline, Stevens
Anthony Martin, Lititz
Cliff Martin, Reinholds
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FOR YOU TO KNOW:

Lancaster County Prison Chaplains (Year 2004)

- Scheduled almost 3,800 clergy visits for individual inmates
- Distributed thousands of Christian books and Bibles, including about 400 "Purpose Driven Life" books by Rick Warren.

Youth Intervention Center (Juveniles ages 10-17) Year 2004

- Chaplain's office provided over 800 services to residents, including involvement from 25 different churches/Christian

To Think About:

"The prison system can release persons, but only the Gospel can set them free."

Forgiveness

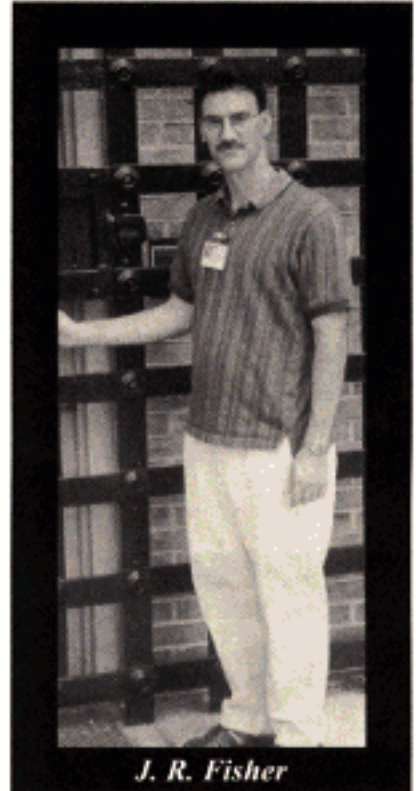
by Chaplain J.R. Fisher, Lancaster County Prison

Freedom through forgiveness... To forgive or not to forgive. This is one of the most important decisions in life, especially for someone who has experienced rejection from the start. Most inmates have a long list of people who need to be forgiven. In most cases, they can't find one good reason to do so. Many feel like forgiveness is about letting somebody "off the hook". In reality, the one getting off the hook is the one who chooses to forgive. Bitterness and resentment causes us to become just like those we hate. Forgiveness enables us to become the kind of person we want to be.

When someone hurts us, we are forced to make a decision. We can either forgive them, or try to hurt them in return. If we forgive, we are released from the situation. If we choose to hurt them, then we start a whole new chapter of pain and chaos. Jesus clearly demonstrated how this works. No one was asking to be forgiven as He was being crucified, and yet, there He was saying, "Father forgive them, they know not what they do."

Why would He choose to forgive when no one was asking for it? Because it was decision time! He had options. He could have become angry and called down fire from heaven. He could have called for Angels to remove Him from the cross, and kill all his enemies. Instead, He chose to forgive. What exactly was in that for Him? I'm glad you asked. Today, He is seated at the right hand of His Father, and He is doing quite well! He is no longer in pain. The nails are gone. He is free!

If we follow His example, we can be free as well. True forgiveness consists of releasing the people who did the damage and the pain they inflicted. Pray for those who are bound through unforgiveness. Many inmates think their biggest problem is a steel gate or a block wall. The bigger issue is a blocked heart. And with God's help, we will lead some to freedom.



J. R. Fisher

Mark Your Calendars! ... Annual Benefit Auction!

MARK YOUR CALENDARS NOW FOR THE ANNUAL PRISON MINISTRY BENEFIT AUCTION to be held October 21 and 22, 2005 at the Farmersville Auction Grounds, located between New Holland and Ephrata, PA.

Early plans are being made for this 22nd annual auction to be bigger and better than ever. The Board has set a goal of clearing \$68,000 (after expenses) to be donated to various prison and reentry ministries. Items to be sold include a hand-carved 3-D picture, pedal tractors, framed paintings and handcraft items (some done by inmates), quilts and wall hangings, children's toys and games, fresh meat, fruit, produce, and lots of groceries. A special feature will be beautiful gift and theme baskets and many valuable gift certificates from area businesses and professionals.

Another highlight of the **BENEFIT AUCTION**, to be held Friday evening and all day Saturday, are the homemade food and baked products, including a Friday Chicken Barbeque and a Pancake and Sausage breakfast on Saturday.

Since the SFPM annual Benefit Auction began in 1984, \$1.1 million has been contributed to a variety of prison ministries, touching lives behind bars and providing quality care and Christian teaching that assists inmates to return to society.



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"It's a God-thing" *By Nelson W. Martin, Director*

Sometime ago I was participating in a planning meeting with county and prison officials. They were very concerned that recidivism rates are not being reduced. National studies show that about 67% of prison inmates return back to prison within a few years of being released. Questions were being asked about why this keeps happening, especially with increasing cost of staffing and added programs of counseling and education.

At one point in the meeting, success recovery rates

of Teen Challenge programs were quoted (I think it was about 80% of persons entering programs) and someone said, "How can that be?" The answer given "It's a God-thing".

As a representative of SFPM at the meeting, I was pleased to share about what God is doing behind bars... Bible studies, one-on-one sharing with chaplains, distributing life-changing literature and giving guidance to lives that God is changing.

And on behalf of our Board of Directors and our staff and chaplains, thanks for continuing to partner with us. God is making a big difference in lives of men and women. "God-things" are happening.

Freedom Focus is published four times a year, providing news and updates to friends and supporters of prison ministries. Support for Prison Ministries is an inter-denominational, multi-faceted ministry that provides prison chaplaincy services, raises funds for other prison related programs, networks with several reentry/aftercare ministries, and provides educational programs and training for local churches and community.

Contact us at:
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Director: Nelson W. Martin

A Prayer Request List
is published monthly and an up to
date website is maintained at
www.supportforprisonministries.org

