

ALPHA AT LANCASTER COUNTY PRISON

Session 1: 30 men came to the 8:30 AM class out of the 40 that had signed up to attend. . . spirited singing . . . one song "Praise Adonai" seemed to connect with the guys . . . Adonai is a Hebrew word for Lord God, Master, guide . . . how exciting to observe persons who were their own life bosses in many ways now acknowledging the need to have a Master to guide them.



Current Alpha leaders at LCP (l-r): Ron Shank, Lenny Pelsinski, Greg Nauman, Bob Shaubach, Ed Bare, Keith Mong, and Nelson Martin

Session 2: Promise claimed for class attendees from II Corinthians 5: 17 "If you are in Christ Jesus, you are a new creation, the old has gone and the new has come" . . . After Nicky Gumbel's powerful teaching about "Why Did Jesus Die?" the guys met in small groups of 8 or 9 . . . Small groups encourage questions to be asked, transparency to be modeled and prayers to be prayed. . . several in small group say they know little about Christianity, came to observe and learn.

"This is all new to me. I knew nothing about God when I came to prison. My cell mate led me to the Lord. I now have a Bible. I came to Alpha to learn more about God and Christian life."

Middle aged man at LCP

"We are in here (LCP) because we did not follow some of the rules found in God's Word. That brought bondage, but here I have found freedom."

Young Man at LCP

Session 3: Men coming front for ministry. Alpha leader praying "Oh God, touch these men's hearts in ways they have never been touched before." . . . Favorite songs "Lord, I Lift Your Name on High" and "Crucified - like a rose trampled on the ground" . . . some guys reaching hands to heaven, others kneeling. . . surely God is among us.

Session 4: Attendance stays steady around 25 . . . Excellent teaching about the Bible, God's Truth standard to be trusted and followed in life. Alpha Leader asked to step out of class by another chaplain so they can pray with a Correctional Officer who had special needs.

The above comments are excerpts and quotes from the current Alpha Class in Lancaster County Prison that meets each Thursday morning. It is a thirteen-week course and is directed by Lenny Pelsinski, who is a volunteer prison chaplain and Alpha Coordinator. 6 group leaders who come from area churches assist Lenny.

An Alpha representative first approached Support for Prison Ministries, who operate the chaplain programs at the Lancaster County Prison (LCP), in June 2001 about the possibility of having a Prison Alpha. Since the first course began in 2002, about 600 inmates have attended 18 Alpha courses. Separate classes have been conducted for men and women. 28 leaders have been involved from 20 area churches.

Alpha presents a very practical introduction to Christian faith. Leaders attempt to build relationships in a non-threatening setting, where any questions can be asked. Subjects covered relate to God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, the Bible, the Church and how knowing Jesus makes a difference in how we live life to the fullest. Praise God that inmates, many from very needy and dysfunctional backgrounds, are finding a life changing, saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

By Nelson W. Martin, Director SPPM

Heart to Heart Children's Ministry

Support for Prison Ministries owns a house on East Strawberry Street, Lancaster which is used as a community outreach/ministry center. HEART TO HEART CHILDREN'S MINISTRY was started over



Selena feeding a goat on a field trip

four years ago when a group of interested individuals wanted to reach the children of Lancaster City. From the first evening program of two children, the Lord has continued to richly bless the ministry, with current attendance reaching fifty or more at times. The children's ages range from five to twelve years old. An evening consists of the staff spending time in devotions and prayer before dividing into four separate routes and walking the streets to pick up the children at their houses. After stopping at the homes of the children we have contact with we bring the groups back to Strawberry House. We start by singing as a group for fifteen minutes before dividing the children into four separate classes based on their ages. Each class is taught a Bible lesson and often a craft project and Bible verse that corresponds with the lesson. Afterwards a snack

is served to the children before the routes are dismissed to take them back to their homes.

Throughout the year the staff plans various special activities with the children including a camping trip, singing program, and special privileges like a trip to McDonald's, Choo-Choo Barn, Petting Zoo, or a weekend at a staff member's home, for good behavior and reciting Bible verses.

The children's smiles, hugs, and comments, like one girl said while walking home one evening, "We are just like family", make it worth our time and effort to reach out with God's love to these children.

As this ministry continues to grow please pray for the outreach, especially for the older children as they face strong peer pressure, and that we as staff would know how to deal with the situations that arise. May God richly bless you for your prayer support!

Dwayne Hoover, Heart to Heart Ministry Volunteer



Childrens activity around a table at Strawberry St. House, including Nyheem, Bebel, and Robert

MARK YOUR CALENDARS NOW

**In 2006, we plan to have our
23rd benefit auction**

**Friday and Saturday, October 27 & 28
at Farmersville Auction**

**Visit our Website often to get
prison ministry updates:**

www.supportforprisonministries.org

**A monthly Prayer Request List and this
Quarterly Newsletter FREEDOM FOCUS
are available IN QUANTITIES
NO CHARGE - For distribution to churches
or interested persons.**



Michael A. Booth, Chaplain
Lancaster County Prison

I WAS IN PRISON...

Matthew 25:36 "...I was in prison and you came to visit me..." These words are from a text familiar to many Christians. I am not sure how many of us really take the time to think through these words of Christ and the ramifications of them. In Bible College I was taught that the text was a mandate for prison ministry. But it took on new meaning for me when I became a chaplain at Lancaster County Prison. I was astonished at how many of the inmates, both young and old, had been exposed to the gospel of Jesus Christ. I would estimate that as many as 70-85% of the men and women who attend Bible study and church admit to receiving Christ as Savior at an early age. They tell of attending Sunday school, youth group and summer camps. They can remember the names of teachers and workers who shared the love of Christ with them. But then sadness soon appears in their faces as they relive horror stories of abuse, bad choices and outright rebellion that took them away from their Savior.

Depending upon your theology some would say that these individuals were never saved in the first place. A real Christian could never have done some of the things that we read in the daily papers. Events that have taken place in Lancaster County over the last few months would contradict this belief. My take on the matter is the inmates fell for the deception of Satan, believing that God is not good and can't be trusted.

My job as a chaplain consists of me convincing inmates that God loves them in spite of their deeds and the need to repent of their sins and turn back to Him. You see I don't believe that God ever left them, they left God. Therefore, when Jesus says that He was in prison and you came to visit Him, He is speaking of the many lost sheep who have strayed from the sheepfold and need to be restored. They need to receive the restorative love of God from grace-filled Christians that have experienced it. Jesus goes on in the text to say that whatsoever we have done unto the least of these that we have done to Him. I'm privileged to see Jesus everyday in the most unlikely faces and the last place people expect Him to show up.

Board of Directors for 2006

The growing and challenging prison ministry work of SFPM is directed by an 11 member board, persons who are active in area churches.

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THANKS TO DWAYNE SENSENIG, who was a faithful board member the past 2 1/2 years. Dwayne and his family have moved from Lititz, PA to Abbeville, SC, where he will be involved with prison ministry under the Carolina Chaplaincy Program. WE WISH GOD'S BLESSINGS ON THEIR LIVES AND MINISTRY.

Support For Prison Ministries
P.O. Box 134
Lititz, PA 17543
(717) 625-0232
Email: sfpm@4safe.com

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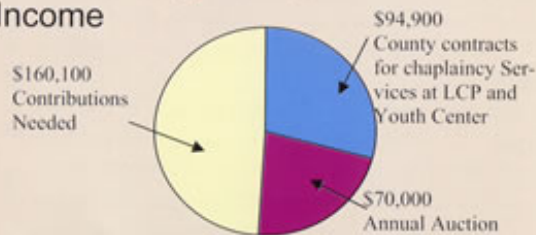
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Focus On Finances

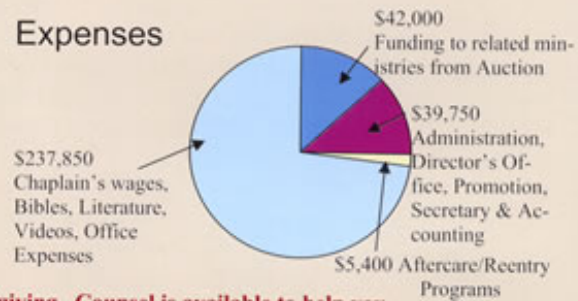
From our annual audit: Only 12% of our total expenses go for administration and promotion, leaving 88% of all income for chaplain wages, prison ministry programs and services to inmates and ex-inmates.

2006 Budget: \$325,000

Income



Expenses



Remember SFPM in your estate planning and long-term giving. Counsel is available to help you with will preparation, asset distribution and tax savings.

A self-addressed envelope is enclosed for your gift to partner with SFPM.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT: THE FREE LIFE IN GOD

Those of us who work in and around prisons know there is a lot of incarceration language used; such as freedom versus lock-up, commitment date versus exit date, and legal details versus charges dropped. Into this mix of tensions and polarities related to security issues, our chaplains have unique opportunities to bring the message of freedom that is offered by Jesus.

Recently, in reading the book of Galatians in Eugene Peterson's THE MESSAGE Bible, I was challenged by his introductory comments, "God is not an impersonal force to be used to make people behave in certain prescribed ways, but a personal Savior who set us free to live a free life. God does not coerce us from without, but sets us free from within."

I suppose it takes our entire life journey to figure out all that God is doing in and through us, but for now I appreciate the freedom that God makes available to us in Jesus. **I WANT TO LIVE IN THAT EXCITING REALITY!!**



Nelson W. Martin