

A Joyful Journey

Reflections by Nelson Martin, Retiring Director



It is hard to believe that I am in my 16th year with Support for Prison Ministries. When I began in September 1999, the prison census and our chaplain staff were both smaller. We had a short mailing list and some dedicated supporters, but not much in organization or communication. Now we have a quarterly newsletter and distribute brochures and literature to many people. Of course, as time went along, we added a website and Facebook account to keep telling others what God is doing behind bars.

I would like to highlight 3 groups that have been so special to me.

1. The Board of Directors. I was asked to be the first director of SFPM. For about 12 years prior to 1999, the board did the work of keeping connected to the chaplains and directing the ministry. The board has been very supportive of my style, allowing me to have the freedom to implement visions and try new projects. At the same time, they kept me accountable and gave good direction along the way. I made some mistakes and would do some things differently, but the board has been very affirming.

2. The Chaplains and Volunteers. I believe there were 4 or 5 chaplains and about 8 volunteers in 1999. We ministered in Lancaster County Prison and the Barnes Hall Juvenile facility. Today we have 9 paid staff and 12 regular badged volunteers at LCP and the Youth Intervention Center. We've had some staff turn over, but also have many long time chaplains that are dedicated to their ministry. I have shared in many good and some difficult times with staff. The SFPM chaplains work together as a team, under the cooperation of prison administration.

3. The Supporters. Today we receive generous donations annually from hundreds of businesses, churches, and interested individuals. We print 8,000 newsletters per quarter, which are widely distributed. Almost 40 people receive our monthly prayer guide. Many connections are made through our website, Facebook, and email accounts. We are grateful for those who tell us they are praying for us and asking questions about prison ministry.

I am delighted with the many friends I have made. Some are part of the prison administration and judicial system. Some are working hard with aftercare/reentry houses that men and women inmates can go to when they are released. I have also made friends with inmates whose lives have been changed by God. I have shared and ministered with a number of ex-inmates who are now radiant Christians. I wish there were more. But I constantly remind myself that some sow, some water, and some harvest.

I also give my full support to work with and walk alongside our new director, Del Burkholder. He is a committed, hard working person who has creative ideas and many prison contacts. I ask for you to pray for and get behind SFPM's new director. It is God's mission, His program. I am so thankful for the past 15+ years of a joyful journey.

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MY CHALLENGING SUMMER IN PRISON

By Stacey D. Catigano, Religious Studies Major at Elizabethtown College

When I returned to college in the fall of 2014, fellow seniors asked what I did over summer break. When I explained how blessed I was to spend my summer interning with the Lancaster County Prison staff, I was met with some surprise to say the least. I am often asked, “Why on earth did you want to spend your summer in a gritty county prison?” I would like to share my response to that question.

Prison ministry requires working in a highly stressful and restrictive environment that few of us outside of prison can imagine. I was frightened and hypersensitive to the sounds, smells and necessary security within the LCP walls. However, I believe Jesus calls us to minister to the outcasts of society including prisoners. Inmates are shamed, judged, and marginalized. And yes, some of them have committed some terrible crimes but what they have done is not who they are.

Prison ministry reminds those who are suffering that God’s love is greater than any sin or evil that can be committed. The heart of rehabilitation begins while listening to the angry, the frightened, the lonely, the poor and the forgotten. Working within the prison population is a privilege to witness the joys and pains of the transformation of souls. Religious education, support groups, and prayer are all vital programs offered in prison thanks to the LCP chaplains and staff.

Support for Prison Ministries provides valuable connections and very necessary information regarding after-care ministry that foster successful reintegration into society, family, and community upon release. Men and women are guided and empowered to break the vicious cycle of incarceration. The LCP chaplains exemplify service by keeping their ear to the ground and their hearts with the people.

Interning with the LCP chaplain staff has been an honor and privilege. Thank you for generously sharing your expertise and knowledge with me over the summer. For me, the experience has been a great blessing in my spiritual life. I have a greater understanding of forgiveness and how wide God’s love can open our hearts. I am forever grateful for this opportunity to learn what vital work chaplains do in prison. I will carry their message with me wherever the Lord leads me.



NEW AT LANCASTER COUNTY PRISON

Mr. Paul Smeal has been appointed as the new LCP warden. He replaces Dennis Molyneaux, who retired in October due to continuing health concerns.

An inmate wrote recently to the chaplain’s office, “Thanks for the personal Bible you gave me. Since I’m reading God’s Word, I feel my spirit is full of truth and light.”



NEW AT YOUTH INTERVENTION CENTER

Caleb Graves has been hired by SFPM as a part-time chaplain. Caleb lives in Mt. Joy. He is a basketball coach at Lancaster Bible College and attends Calvary Church.

Nelson Martin, SFPM Director, was given an award at a recent YIC banquet. Given by the Pennsylvania JDCAP (Juvenile Detention Centers and Alternative Programs) it honor Nelson’s “distinguished service by an individual outside the field of detention.”

AUCTION HIGHLIGHTS



We had another great auction weekend on October 24 and 25, 2014. This year we moved the auction to the spacious and comfortable Ephrata Business Center. In the new Ephrata location, we had excellent cooperation from many persons; for pick up and set up of merchandise, sale runners, clean up helpers, and a strong attendance. Food stands did well and many generous donations from area businesses and individuals helped cover auction costs.

Net receipts, after expenses, were \$100,353. That makes a grand total of \$2,202,600 proceeds distributed in the past 31 years from these auctions. Praise God!



WE THANK GOD FOR ANOTHER EXCITING AUCTION. WE WISH GOD'S BLESSINGS ON ALL WHO MADE IT POSSIBLE. WE REJOICE THAT MANY INMATES AND EX-INMATES WILL BENEFIT FROM THESE PROCEEDS!!

ANNUAL PICNIC ENJOYED BY ALL

About 40 persons were in attendance on a September Sunday evening at the picnic grove at Middle Creek Church of the Brethren.

After a delicious hot buffet meal, served by Darel and Jennifer Seibert, the group did some singing and SFPM distributed some gifts.

Del Burkholder, incoming director, gave an inspiration talk. This annual event is a way for the SFPM Board to say THANK YOU to the dedicated staff and volunteers.



SEASON'S GREETINGS



On behalf of the board of directors and the chaplain staff of Support for Prison Ministries, we wish you all a blessed Christmas. May you take time to truly worship Jesus, not only as a baby in the manger, but as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Just as the wise men came with their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, may we give our resources, talents, and hearts to follow the Lord Jesus.

We also encourage you to pray for and remember those in prison during the holidays. For many, this can be the loneliest part of the year, as they remember past times with family and loved ones. Our ministry needs about **\$65,000** in contributions during December. Your gifts will help us balance the 2014 year and have funds to begin another year, as we continue to share God's hope and healing to those behind the bars.

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

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A WORD FROM DEL

By Del Burkholder, who becomes SFPM's new director in January

I want to publicly state the respect I have for Nelson Martin and I marvel at the growth of SFPM in his tenure. I am anxiously excited about the opportunity to work with this ministry and everyone involved.

As we think of the Christmas time, think of Mary and Joseph...wondering as every parent would with their newborn son, what will he become? Many parents have wondered the same with their newborns. Over the years I have received many letters from broken hearted parents who, at one time, had nothing positive to say about prison ministry, but are now pleading for assistance of chaplains in the prison where their son or daughter is held. As you think of the season of giving, please remember the work we are doing in prison as our chaplains and affiliates continue to touch lives in Jesus name. *"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 sent it."* Isaiah 55:11 NIV

