

ALPHA GOES TO PRISON

By Kathy Pennell and Doug Campbell

Bringing people to a life-changing, saving knowledge of Jesus Christ starts with building relationships. Alpha is a ten-week course in "basic Christianity" where relationships are established in small groups and the love of Jesus Christ is modeled.

Alpha, now international in scope, originated in England over twenty years ago. It has enjoyed a remarkable success there as well as in the United States and in 135 other countries. More than 750,000 people have taken the Alpha course in North America. Currently, there are over 40 sites offering Alpha in Lancaster County, PA.

Alpha is not only offered in churches but also in homes, prisons and schools around the world. When President Bush was governor of Texas he listened to a presentation by a group of Alpha representatives. After the presentation he turned to one of his aides and said "make it happen." Now, Alpha is happening in many prisons in Texas.

In June 2001 St. Thomas Episcopal Church contacted the chaplain's office at the Lancaster County Prison in order to discuss holding Alpha sessions in the prison. Chaplain Al Huber responded very positively and agreed to lay the groundwork necessary for Alpha classes to begin on the third floor. Six men from various churches, three of whom are pastors, comprised our first men's Alpha team, which began in April 2002. Thirty men from third floor housing units signed up to take the Alpha course. At the end of that first Alpha session, a card was presented to the team. This card was signed by all the men who had taken the Alpha course, thanking the team members for their ministry.

Blessings continue to abound for the team members

as well as the men on the third floor. How encouraging it has been to hear the chaplain's report that they witness changes in many men even after just two or three sessions. Two of these men have since left the prison, been baptized at a church, and have joined the local church's Alpha team. Additional support from Chaplains J.R. Fisher, Isaias Maldonado and Lenny Pelsinski has proven invaluable in the continued success of Lancaster County Prison Alpha. The Lord is definitively at work in this ministry.

Presently, a second session of Alpha is nearing completion, with a third session scheduled to begin this winter. Eventually we hope to offer Alpha during the evening to men on the second floor housing units. Chaplain Al Huber has also asked for Alpha to begin sessions with the women. The Women's Alpha ministry begins January 6th. Eight dedicated women, plus Chaplain's Janice Hess and Lenny Pelsinski will form this team. What a great opportunity to minister to the women at Lancaster County Prison.

In addition to Alpha going inside the prison, Alpha representatives are talking to Cody Hall who is coordinating the establishment of transitional reentry housing for inmates when they leave

the prison. Tentative plans are to begin classes on the outside in the summer or fall of 2003 with the Transition to Community program.

Support for Prison Ministries, who provide the paid chaplains and regular chaplain volunteers to the Lancaster County Prison, are glad for this opportunity to partner with Alpha. What an exciting way to bring the never changing message of salvation and Good News of Jesus Christ to men and women behind the bars of prison.



*ALPHA teachers preparing to enter prison:
(L-R) Karl Steffy, Craig Hartranft, Lenny Pelsinski,
Jeff Weit, Doug Campbell and Ken Book.*

A REPORT FROM THE YOUTH INTERVENTION CENTER

Lee Stauffer is an assistant chaplain at the new Lancaster County Youth Intervention Center, where juveniles, ages 10-17 are detained until their court hearings. There is also a shelter area, where noncriminal or minor offenders are housed. Here is a recent report from Lee.

God has proven Himself faithful with this promise to me, "And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it." Isaiah 30:21. If someone had told me 7 years ago that I would be taking the gospel of Jesus Christ to Lancaster area young men in detention I would have said "impossible."

Praise God, His power is limitless when individuals are willing to wholly yield themselves to God and His will. I have come to really enjoy serving my Lord in this capacity. Of course, ministry in this way also has many challenges at the same time.

One of the biggest challenges is trying to have as much impact on individuals before they move on. Many of the residents are gone within 30 days. Sometimes they share heart felt needs and personal issues and the next week when I come back to follow-up I find they are gone. Another challenge is to discern who is genuine and sincere and who is not. Some are just looking for an escape from school or want to fill their boredom while being on a unit restriction. Others are truly searching for answers. It's always a blessing to walk onto a housing area and have 3 or 4 residents



Youth Intervention Center

say "Chap, I want to talk to you today." Sometimes the staff informs me of a resident that made a request to "talk to the chap."

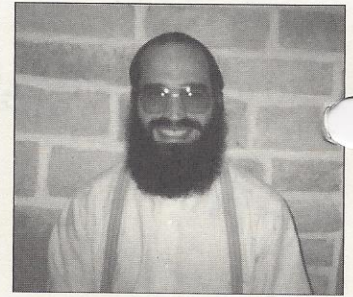
I am never surprised at some of the questions these guys come up with. Here are few recent examples; "Can you tell me how to get into God?"

What's the difference between the Old and the New Testament? What is true fasting according to the Bible?" I discovered that the fellow who asked that last question took it seriously and went without eating for a day or two at a time. The staff even commented that he prays all the time he is in his room!

I have been in juvenile detention ministry for 3 years, and the past few weeks have been the best times I have had. One highlight was in having the opportunity to lead a young man to salvation. He had a very clear conversion. Another blessing is to sit down with these 15 - 16 year olds, showing them the plain and simple plan of salvation from the Bible and then to hear them tell you in a sober tone "No one ever told me that before."

Of course, many consider the cost of coming to Christ and are not willing to follow through at the present time. Yet I believe we are sowing precious seeds for the Kingdom of God. And not all times are productive. There are times of defeat, discouragement and seeming fruitlessness on the surface. Yet I keep reminding myself that all things done for the kingdom of God in Jesus name are never wasted or totally lost.

It is my desire to be most effective for the glory of Jesus Christ in all I do. Please continue to pray for the important work of juvenile ministry, that Christ will be glorified, souls will be saved and transformed from a life of sin, and that young people will be set free from the power of Satan to serve the true and living God.



Lee Stauffer

SUPPORT FOR PRISON MINISTRIES BOARD RE-ORGANIZES FOR 2003

At their December 2002 board meeting, a number of changes were made to the officers and the board of SFPM.

Leon Roy Martin, *Chairman*, Lititz
 Glenn Hoover, *Vice Chairman*, Ephrata
 Warren Hackman, *Secretary*, Newmanstown
 Larry Martin, *Treasurer*, Ephrata

Two members, Brian Black and Lloyd Riehl, finished their terms on the board.

NEW MEMBERS are
 Warren Fox, Martindale
 Cliff Martin, Reinholds

OTHER BOARD MEMBERS

J. Marlin Becker, Manheim
 Kevin Hahn, Lititz
 Randal V. Kline, Stevens
 John Rutt II, Ephrata
 Anthony Zeiset, Narvon

CHANNELS OF BLESSING

By Dennis Nolt, a volunteer chaplain at Lancaster County Prison

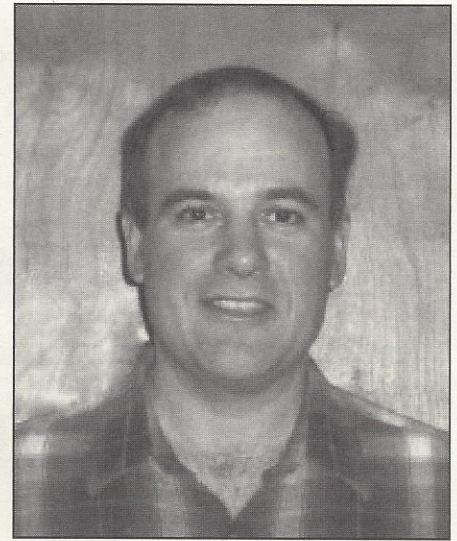
Is a Christian a channel or a reservoir? Do we keep God's power, joy and love to ourselves or is it meant to flow through us to others? Will we ever be satisfied if we hoard what God gives us? I don't believe so!!! Recently as I sat with Mike and heard him share what he just learned from the Gospel of John I was amazed. He wanted to know why the Jews who were looking for the Messiah couldn't believe when He presented Himself. He also noted that Jesus often spoke in "riddles." I was amazed how much this young Christian was grasping from the Word. With tears in his eyes, he told me how he had kept repeating the cycle of drugs and then he said "I want more than that out of life."

We have an awesome God who works by His Spirit in men's minds and hearts. The thing that amazes me even more is that God chooses you and me to be part of His process. Personally, I can't even put into words the joy and satisfaction I have when God uses me to speak life and truth into an inmates life and I can visibly see a spark of life and hope kindled in him. Many men in prison have left the enemy drain just about all life out of them. Many have simply given up.

During the summer I started at LCP I remember a couple of men I would get together with in a small hot room for a Bible study. It was an informal study, but the men were so hungry for real friends and fellowship. We had some tremendous times. Bill eventually went upstate. He wrote to tell me how rough it was in state prison with guys who had lots of time, hate, bitterness, violence and how they despised Christians. Bill had been strong in his faith but was really getting shaken to his foundations. Eventually he wrote and told about church services as he has gotten into the body of Christ there. He says he is soon coming back to Lancaster and expects to be back with family. I really feel bonded to this man, even though I don't know him that long. When he was going through his struggles I felt like a father who wants to protect his son, but I realized I had to release him to his real Father. It is great to see what God is doing in Bill's life. He is and will be another channel that God is flowing through to touch others.

I remember another time I sat down beside a guy I had never seen in the kitchen workers area. We began talking and soon noticed he was not the typical inmate. He came from well to do background. His brother was a policeman and they really clashed on a family issue. As we chatted, he was very free to say he didn't believe in such a thing as God and all that stuff. I left him know that what he thought didn't change the fact that God is real and in control, including actually stopping him from doing the crime he had planned.

He seemed very intellectual and not open to what I shared. Guess what? The next week he was very open, and had many questions. Soon after that he asked the Lord into his heart. I would never have expected that when we first conversed. I love the verse in Ephesians 3:20 that says God is able to do exceeding, abundantly above what we ask or think. And I am constantly surprised with that in prison.



Volunteer Chaplain Dennis Nolt

In John 7: 37-39 Jesus talked about rivers of living water flowing through us. The Spirit of God is alive in working in us. That reminds me of a song we used to sing "He is Alive." I'm also reminded of what the disciples told the Jews when commanded not to preach anymore in the name of Jesus. Peter said we must speak the things we have seen or heard. So again we see that when the Spirit of God is free to move, the Word literally comes alive (talk to some recently saved person) and people are drastically changed. I thank God for the tremendous blessing of being part of what He is doing. Hallelujah!!!

Quotes & Interesting Facts

Number of area pastor visits to inmates in Lancaster County Prison: 10 -12 daily, over 4,000 annually

Number of churches or youth groups that come at least monthly to the Lancaster County Youth Intervention Center for ministry: 15

A quote from David Sawtelle, Prison Fellowship Pennsylvania director:
"There is hope for prisoners. As I travel, I see that many churches are starting to work together at re-entry and aftercare with a purpose. Inmates need to be given opportunities when they get out of prison. These efforts will certainly cut down on the rate of recidivism."

Overheard within the prison walls:
"I may be scarred for life, but I am healed for eternity!"

"The prison officials know my number, but Jesus knows my name."

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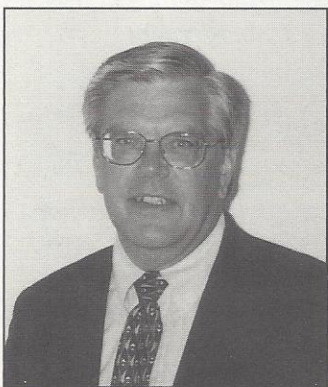
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ANNUAL BENEFIT AUCTION WAS HUGE SUCCESS



Hundreds of persons came to the SFPM annual benefit auction the last week-end of October 2002. Persons enjoyed delicious chicken barbeque meals, home-made food and baked goods, and bid on many quality items that were donated by area businesses and individuals.

After all income was received and expenses paid, net proceeds totaled over \$67,000. Ministries receiving these funds were: We Care Programs, Atmore, AL; Freedom Gate, Reading, PA; Rivers of Living Water Ministries (Jim Newsom), Akron, PA; Transition to Community (Cody Hall) Lancaster, PA; and the chaplain programs in Lancaster County Prison and the Youth Intervention Center.



*Nelson W. Martin
SFPM Director*

DIRECTORS REPORT ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆

Recently I preached at the Schuylkill Federal Prison, near Minersville, PA. (Our Millport congregation sends teams monthly to do two church services within this huge facility). I was blessed by their enthusiastic worship, fifty to sixty men singing loudly about their Lord.

They sang the familiar chorus, "Soon and very soon, we are going to see the King" with

its' various verses about "no more tears, pain, death there" and then they added a new verse "No more prisons there, we are going to see the King". Many of those men have long

sentences with no much to live for in this life, but it was clear they belong to Jesus and are looking for a better home. That was an encouragement to me!

The new year of 2003 is upon us, with many new and exciting opportunities to take the gospel behind bars. In December, the SFPM board approved a record budget of \$298,386. Of this total, about \$130,000 is needed in contributions from churches, businesses and interested individuals.

I THANK YOU FOR YOUR STRONG SUPPORT IN THE PAST YEAR AND INVITE YOU TO CONTINUE TO PRAY FOR AND FINANCIALLY GIVE IN 2003. AND PRAISE GOD WITH US FOR THE OPPORTUNITIES WE HAVE TO DO PRISON MINISTRY.