



Freedom Focus

A Newsletter with information for your partnering with us in

Volume 21
Number 81
Summer 2020

“Proclaiming Freedom for Prisoners”

COVID-19 and SFPM Chaplain’s Work **By Del Burkholder**

COVID-19 came fast. We had just completed a very successful SFPM prison conference on March 7th and within a week lockdowns were already beginning and events were being cancelled. Prison ministry was going to change as very few prison ministries would be allowed to operate within their prison. This was not the case though at Lancaster County Prison (LCP) as most of our chaplains continued their work. What follows is some of Support For Prison Ministries work inside prison during the worldwide COVID-19 outbreak.

By Wednesday, March 11, Ohio state prisons had gone into lockdown. I had a conversation with LCP Chaplaincy Coordinator, Katie Harnish, but she had not heard anything on a lockdown yet at the prison.

On Thursday, March 12, I received official notification that all PA state prisons had gone into lockdown. Our Streams of Life Chaplains were informed that all chapel services were discontinued and we were not able to minister physically in the State prisons anymore.

Then on Friday, March 13, I received a call from Katie that LCP was on lockdown and only our paid staff would be allowed in the prison. That meant our volunteer and contract chaplains would be restricted from going into LCP. All programming was also cancelled, including Bible studies, church services, and pastor visits.

At the Youth Intervention Center, Chaplaincy Coordinator Jeryl Zimmerman, said that only our paid chaplain staff was being allowed in there also and closed to volunteers or volunteer group. (continued on page 3)

DIANE PISTONE RETIRES AFTER 23 YEARS!!



If you called the Lancaster County Prison Chaplain’s office in the last 23 years, there is a good chance the voice on the other end of the line was Support For Prison Ministries Diane Pistone. Since 1997 she has been a dedicated fulltime office worker inside the prison. On April 30, 2020, Diane retired from the prison and Support For Prison Ministries.

Katie Harnish, Chaplaincy Coordinator, says the following: “Diane has been a faithful servant in the Chaplain’s Office and did an excellent job at keeping the Chaplain’s Office running smoothly for 23+years! We will miss her! Blessings in your retirement!”

What brought you to work for SPFM?

My pastor, David Hornsby, was a volunteer Chaplain. He called me from the Chaplain's Office one day to say there was a job opening for a secretary. I had called into the Chaplain’s Office many times to schedule minister visits for a friend. After one of those calls, I thought how great it would be to work in that position, knowing there was no way it would ever happen. But God worked out all the details so I could have my "dream job!"

Memories of early days:

~ First Death Notification - after verifying that the inmate's father had passed away, a Chaplain went to inform the inmate. The inmate was brought to the Chaplain’s Office to make a phone call and I remember he cried. It was hard to watch him but I was so thankful for all the support the prison had set up to help him deal with this crisis in his life.

(continued on page 2)

TRAINS AND PRISONS

By Nelson W. Martin

Trains and prisons seem to go together in some American country songs and historical folklore. Support for Prison Ministries had a unique and unusual model train fundraising event the first part of 2020.

A local businessman/train collector offered to donate his entire train collection to SFPM to sell as a fundraiser. Nelson Martin, retired director of SFPM, who is a model train hobbyist and works on some train layouts, took on the challenge.

In early January, a truckload of G scale trains (commonly known as Garden Railroading) was moved to a warehouse in Lancaster. Nelson worked hard at sorting inventory, cleaning and doing some repair work. It was an impressive donation; about 20 engines and boxed sets, 50 assorted train cars, over 600 feet of track, about 40 buildings and boxes of figures and scenery, electric supplies, wooden bridges and trestle sets.

Nelson then contacted and sold the collection piece by piece to train clubs and businesses. During this activity, the COVID 19 virus shutdown business and garden railroad layouts. Some dollar value of the remaining collection was lost. However, by early May, everything was sold and SFPM added over \$3,000 to its fundraising account.

As SFPM shared in a letter to the original donor, "Thanks for this gift, on behalf of the many inmates who will benefit from services from our chaplains." And Nelson quickly echoed, "Yes, it was a lot of challenging work, but it was fun and exciting." Praise be to God!



Diane Pistone Retires after 23 Years (continued from page 1)

~ Basketball - when I started working in the Chaplains Office, the gym was right outside our office. Walking through the gym during basketball games was interesting! Sometimes the men would stop playing; other times, I had to watch for missed passes to not be hit by the ball. I was working in the office alone one time when the basketball hit the door behind me...it was very loud. The door flew open and a wave of fear came over me. After tossing the ball back to the players, I told the Lord if He wanted me to be in this ministry, I couldn't live in fear. He immediately released me from the fear and it never returned. Praise God!

Highlights from your time at LCP?

There were so many highlights: helping ministers understand how they & their church can connect with an inmate and minister to prison staff; finding the right book and/or resources to fill an inmate's request; helping family members be able to stress less when a parent, sibling or child has been incarcerated; connecting a Chaplain or outside minister to a special need an inmate has; getting a phone call from an ex-offender who needs encouragement or wants to let us know they are doing well; praying with and for those we come in contact with every day, inside & outside the prison; and hearing feedback from Chaplains when they come back from the block.

What God has revealed to you?

God tells us sin is sin, there are not different levels. Men & women who are in prison have made some bad decisions. I make bad decisions at times, too. If that's the reason people are incarcerated, then "there but by the grace of God, go I." I have been blessed with godly people in my life to pray with me and hold me accountable.

Anything else to share with the reader?

I appreciate the years I've had the privilege of working with Chaplains, SFPM Board, LCP Officers & staff, clergy & volunteers through the Chaplain's Office. I will continue to keep them in my prayers and treasure the friendships and memories all my days.

Thank you, Diane for your many years of service. You will be missed. Blessings on your retirement!!!

Covid-19 and SFPM Chaplain's Work (continued from page 1)

Chaplain staff shared their thoughts during this time.

Chaplains are permitted to continue delivering religious materials and be on the blocks talking with inmates. There is a lot of fear and anxiety, as we all have been experiencing, but it is heightened, as you can imagine when they are in an isolated situation already.

We have had many opportunities to minister to inmates and staff. We miss our volunteers! And are looking forward to when we can conduct studies and church services again.

Thanks for your continued support during this time! Keep praying for inmates and staff alike, that they would seek Jesus as the Prince of Peace during this time of unrest.

*A young lady I have been meeting with has started looking up verses in the Bible. She commented how she has felt so much peace --- peace she has not felt in a while. She noted how she is feeling excited about her future for the first time in a long time. **(Katie Harnish Chaplaincy Coordinator LCP)***

*We have three different correspondence Bible courses that inmates can do here at LCP. The requests for these studies has grown. I have enjoyed reading inmate responses to the questions and encouraging them to continue learning about Jesus and growing in His love for them. We have been handing out many more books and Bibles than normal because the inmates have more time on their hands. We are so thankful that we have the books, Bibles, and Bible Study courses to hand out to the inmates. **(Jewel Sensenig LCP Office)***

*During these times God has shown me even more the importance of caring for those in prisons. With visitation, Church services, Bible studies and other privileges being removed from the prisons due to Covid-19 the necessity for community has been magnified for these men and women. Intimate relationships with Christ are growing in the midst of this storm. **(Chaplain Kenny Bowman)***

*I am convinced that God is still present during this unusual and potentially stressful time. I recognize His goodness in my life and in the lives of others at the Youth Intervention Center. I am encouraged to witness young people praying, quoting scripture and learning to observe God's love for them during this difficult time. We do not need to be traumatized if we stay close to Jesus. **(Jeryl Zimmerman Youth Intervention Center Chaplaincy Coordinator)***

Some challenges dealing with Covid-19 in a prison setting is that it can spread rapidly to prisoners in a confined space. Lancaster County Prison officials did a very good job managing COVID-19 during this time and are to be commended. There were several inmates and staff, as well as one of our chaplains, who tested positive for Covid-19. Thankfully, all have recovered. We are grateful that our other chaplains remained healthy and we continue to pray for health for all within the walls of LCP.

As Director, I am proud of our chaplains answering the call from God to continue working in the prison during this virus. There was no hesitation from our Chaplains. They wanted to be on the frontlines at prison during this time. Their service to the Kingdom will not go unnoticed by our Lord and Savior.

*I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me,
I was in prison and you came to visit me. **Matthew 25:36***



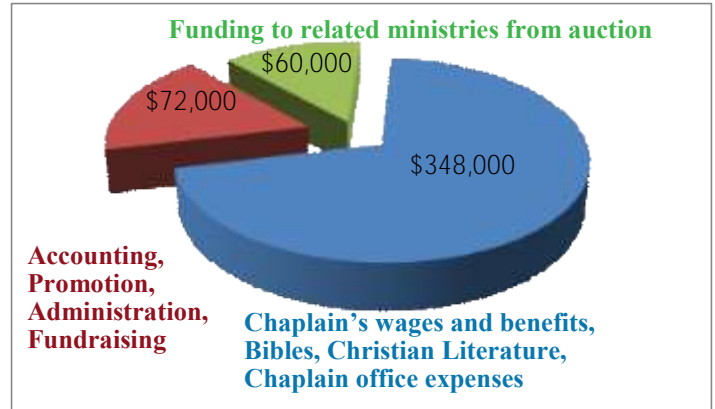
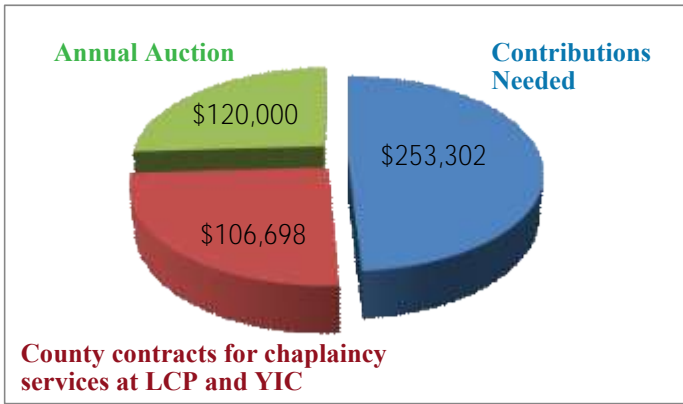
**We are planning on having our 37th Annual Benefit Auction on
October 23 & 24, 2020.
Lorraine Reiff 3D, Chicken Dinner, Gift Baskets, Gift Cards
and so much more!!!
Mark your calendars now and plan to attend!!**

Focus On Finances

Income

2020 Budget: \$480,000

Expenses



You can also make a donation on line through our website.

A self-addressed envelope is enclosed for your gift to partner with SFPM. **THANK YOU !!**

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

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DIRECTOR'S REPORT: UNCERTAIN TIMES

By Del Burkholder, SFPM Director

Therefore, do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself.

Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. Matthew 6:34

In this passage, Jesus addresses uncertain times and how we as believers should respond. Never has this generation faced the health challenge we are now facing. It seems life certainties have been swept out from under our feet. Jesus tells us to take it one day at time and to seek the kingdom of God and righteousness.

During this time of uncertainty our chaplains have bravely continued going into the prison to take the light of the Gospel behind dark walls. Please remember this ministry in your gifts and prayers during this time of reduced giving as many feel the economic impact. Wise planning by the SFPM Board, with reserve funds available in case of future perils, has prepared us for this time of famine in the land. **Please help us restock our resources to keep this important and needed prison work going in the time of drought in our land.**