



Newsletter

Chaplain Ed Welsh

Isaiah 61:1

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I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me. Matthew 25:36

Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly

Its always the same. When I go to start a newsletter, I never know what I am going to write about. But this time I have at least one topic to start off with. That is we are coming up on the second anniversary of me becoming a Chaplain.

Its is hard to believe that it has actually been two years! Many of you will remember how when it all started, I had serious doubts whether it would last any time. The politics within the jail, my past and a number of other things where all stacked against it having much of a chance.

In my first meeting with Pastor Jack, he explained to me that I would have to do this as a missionary. Not being actually on staff meant I would have no guarantee on salary. I later found out from a member of the board that Jack intended it as a warning. I know it has been hard for my wife at times to not know from month to month but actually it has become a blessing all

in itself. A blessing to see how faithful He is.

Last year for the anniversary I sent out a open letter to all who were on the mailing list. I went back to read it to see if it would give me a perspective on what has happened in this past year. It was like going back and reading a journal and after reading it again I thought I would include it in this newsletter to show how the Lord is continuing to bless...

November 11, 2001

Open Letter to the Church,

Soon after starting in the new ministry of being a Chaplain at the LA County Jail, I started the bi-monthly newsletter. It started out as a way to let all the supporters know what was happening with the ministry and to make prayer concerns known. As time has gone on the newsletter has kind of taken on a life of its own. I am constantly running into people who ask me things concerning something I have written about. The ministry as a whole has been a real blessing.

This month is a milestone. November 1st 2000 I started as Chaplain. It's hard to believe that it has already been a year! I wanted to do something for this anniversary, to send a letter out to

thank everyone who helped make this first year possible. All of you have been such an encouragement to my family and me. It is an awesome thing to have people come up to me saying they are praying for the ministry, for me personally and for my family!

Looking back to what has happened this past year there are several memories to reflect on. Many challenges have been over come and many more yet to be achieved. Just a few short months ago I doubted if I would even be in the jail much longer.

That was my biggest mistake, 'doubting'. My trust should always be in what God will do and not what I think I am doing.

I am happy to report that after recently having some meetings with the administration of the jail, we are now receiving the complete support of the Sheriff's Department. God has been continuing to open doors and remove obstacles, where now the religious programs are starting to work better than they have been in a long time, or so I am told. There are a lot of barriers yet to overcome, the

difference now is we are seeing progress and it is fueling the optimism that hadn't been there in the past.

Looking back on the memories of this past year, it would be very hard to pick out just a few. There have been many great memories. But one does stick out in my mind. We had just finished one of the yard concerts at Chuckawalla prison. As we were leaving the yard I fell to the back of the group as we escorted the volunteers out. I remember looking at a group of nearly 50 people walking in front of me and that is when it struck me. When my family and I first started going to Calvary Chapel Chino Hills there was only about 50 adults in our whole congregation! To think that this many people from so many diverse backgrounds would care enough to give of themselves and be involved with a ministry, reaching out to criminals. We have police, businessmen, schoolteachers, and housewives, people of all walks of life. They all have one thing in common, the heart to bring the gospel to men, women and young adults in institutions all over this

Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly (continued)

state. I know why I am doing it, it is my past and God has called me to it to use my past for His glory. But I must admit I continue to be amazed at the giving and loving hearts of so many of you who are also obviously called to the mission field of Prison Ministry.

On behalf of all the prisoners who have been helped by so many of you, that gave of yourself, thank you. To all of you who helped to support my family, whether financially or with your prayers, thank you. I really love what I am doing and without all of you it wouldn't have been possible. Ultimately it is all of us doing this ministry as a team with God at the controls. I've thanked the Lord many times for letting me do this and I wanted to thank all of you for being in this with me. May God bless you.

After rereading that letter from a year ago it helped me to appreciate how the Lord has continued to bless this ministry. From the way the ministry has continued to grow and improve, to the new opportunities He has opened for us!

Just a few weeks ago we did our second concert at the woman's prison at CIW. It was very successful! Many woman made Christ their savior that day. Both Scarlet Hope and Ordinary People were awesome. Ordinary People literally had them dancing in the isles. And after six years of trying, starting in January we will be in CIW regularly with a team teaching a Bible study. Please keep this new part of our ministry up in prayer. I have learned the hard way, every time we venture into a new area of ministry there is the spiritual battle to contend with. The enemy doesn't want us trespassing in his domain.

Another new possibility that has come up for us is to go to one of the newer prisons in the system, Califor-

nia State Prison in Lancaster. I recently spoke with the Chaplain there and he is very interested in us doing a concert. One of the things very exciting about that is CSP is a level four (highest) security. It would be a first to have anything like that in a level four facility anywhere in the state.

We are also in the process of getting a series of concerts set up over the next few months out at Ironwood State Prison in Blythe. We were supposed to do them at the start of this past summer but were unable to make it happen. We have been having an awesome harvest at Ironwood! We recently had a second group of men baptized there.

As I have said before it is a desire of mine to have our own brand of Harvest Crusade within the prison system. But not to just go in with a hit and run message. Instead, to leave behind local churches in the area of the particular prison to continue to follow up and feed His sheep with regular Bible studies.

The things that have happened in nearly eight years of the prison ministry and now the past two years of the jail Chaplaincy can not be expressed any better than Paul did when he said:....

Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.
Eph 3:20-21

Speaking of the jail side of this ministry, some improvements that have taken place have helped to give a new balance to what we are doing. There has been a new office added to the other three we had within the jail. That enabled us to assign two Chaplains there so that more ministry goes out on the particular floor where the office is located. We have tripled the amount of weekly Bible studies on that floor. And were able to get a counseling program in there, were there was none before.

This past year the county had to close one of its facilities and we were able to add those Chaplains to our group in Men's Central Jail. So now we have six Chaplains walking the high security module rows that were not being covered in the way they should before. We are coming much closer to the point of giving all 7,000 men the opportunity to be seen by someone than we were ever able to do before.

There are some students at Calvary Chapel Bible College in a pastoral preparation class that have been signed up to come in and teach Bible studies for part of their credit. It is a win / win. The students learn to teach to what can be a tough audience and the inmates get some well grounded teaching from people who have a heart to serve.

As much progress as there has been, we still have more that can be done. Of course that will always be so. I just ask that all of you who have been praying for us continue to do so and thank you so much for it. We also have an ongoing need for good Christian reading material of any kind.

I wanted to save this last bit of good news for the end of this article to kind of highlight the kind of things that God has been doing. Many have asked about Hannibal and Monster. I am happy announce that very recently Monster accepted Jesus into his life! So keep him in your prayers but now you will be praying for a fellow brother in Christ.

As for Hannibal, in contrast, he is no closer than he ever was. I have become very discouraged when it comes to him. Only God and your continued prayers will make the difference.

Come see us at the tree



Once again the Christmas trees are showing up so we know Thanksgiving is just around the corner. Do you have something to be thankful for? Has the Lord blessed you? Or maybe the other way around, did you just go through a terrible time where the Lord was there for you.

For the first time in a few years we are going to make Angel Tree our main Christmas outreach into the community. I am really excited about it and as the word is starting to travel around the church it sounds like some of you are too.

Within the next few weeks there will be a more formal announcement on this but the work is already starting behind the scenes. Paper work is starting, calls are being made and storage areas are being prepared.

For those of you who do not know what Angel Tree is, it's a program started by Prison Fellowship a number of years ago. A program set up to get Christmas presents to the children of the men and women who are in prison.

It is a wonderful way to do mission outreach into our own community. There are families that go to our church now who started coming directly because of the Angel Tree program. In the past, ministries like The Call and Sharing Your Faith would help us to distribute the presents to the families. That way it

gave those ministries the chance to do what they were called to do, share the gospel.

It gives them the opportunity to gain access to a number of people they normally wouldn't have been able to share with. Not many people turn down free presents and then they get the chance to accept the best present of all when learn the real meaning of Christmas.

I personally have enjoyed taking my own kids with me to deliver the presents. It's a way of showing them how much they are blessed in a very real way. Every one of them over the years has had the chance to share.

While writing this my wife, Allison came in telling me how she had just been talking to someone down at church. They told her how a number of years ago while doing Angel Tree and they had brought their eight year old son with them to deliver the presents. The people were brought to the Lord and the eight year old boy floated out of there two feet off the ground. I understand that the boy caught the vision that night and has been going to all kinds of mission outreaches ever since.

This year as Chaplain at Men's Central Jail, I got the chance to get at the other end of Angel Tree. Because I believe in the program as much as I do, I spent close to two weeks walking rows at the jail. I can honestly now say I have been in every part of the jail.

It was great to see the attitudes of most of the men. How much they

appreciated it. For a moment many of them put down their rough outward persona and you were able to glimpse the heart of a father that has to be away from their children because of the bad choices in life they had made.

I know that there are some people who don't want to help prisoners in any way at all. I can understand that completely. Especially with the terrible things in the news every day. They deserve to be where they are at! For those of you who may feel that way, know that this really isn't a program to minister to prisoners; it is for the children of prisoners, who in their own way are just as much a victim of their parent's crime as anyone else.

We will be needing people to volunteer to help make this all happen. People willing to deliver presents, others who will help wrap presents. Just lending a hand wherever it is needed.

The actual announcement won't be till November 10th when the table for signups will be out front. But please in the mean time pray about what you would like to do to be a part of this.

As it is always true when you do anything like this. You go out with the intentions of blessing someone and end up being more blessed yourself. So come see us at the Christmas tree out front of the church on the 10th.

When we first started in the prison ministry we were just going into CIM Minimum yard. At that time they had a man who had been a pastor that had backslidden, ran off with the secretary, his wife dies of cancer and his kids disowned him. He truly went through a Job experience.

Well God has a way of using things for His glory. So when this man repented and came back to the Lord, God used him to help organize a church there at the Chino prison. His past knowledge as a Pastor helped to equip the body there on Minimum yard.

One of the men in that body was a man named Mario. He was the clerk for the state Chaplain.

Over the first couple years I really came to appreciate this brother and his commitment to the Lord. He was taking Bible correspondent courses and teaching studies with the other inmates. Watching him grow was really a blessing.

Mario got out a few years ago and when ever you see one get ready to get out, you can't help but wonder if they are going to make it or not. Was it really just some more of that "jail house religion" or were the roots able to get deep?

Mario had it tough going out to a wife and two children after being gone for more than five years. His wife was in the last stages of a fantail disease

that she wasn't taking care of in the way she should. Instead she continued in the destructive life style.

He came by the bookstore to see me one night and shared how hard it was to keep walking the walk and he gave me a message to tell the men he left behind. He said they knew how much he was in the Word while he was in. He warned them to stay in the Word even more, for without it he would have never made it once he got out and was faced with all he was.

His wife was giving him so many problems and like Hosea he stood by her, until for the children sake he had to remove them from that environment. All these trials kept coming his way and yet Mario remained faithful to his call to the Lord.

The next time I saw Mario I was walking into the LA Jail and I heard a semi trucks horn honking and my name being called. It had now been a year or so since he had first got out. He was doing well. It was going to be his last day as a driver because he was getting a promotion to dispatcher. Things were going better for him. He was very active in his church and being a single parent. The thing that showed through more than anything else was that as we stood there talking that day, I could see the joy of the Lord in his face.

I hadn't heard from him in some time now and in the back of my mind sometimes wondered how he was doing. Then a few weeks ago I got a call from

him.

He was calling to ask a favor. He had a friend who had a brother there at the Jail and he wanted me to go see him and give the guy a Bible. I get the same kind of calls and e-mails from people all the time. Someone always knows someone in there they want you to go see. It a big part of what I do.

I went and saw his friends brother and when I called Mario back, I had some good news, the brother is now a brother in the Lord. I shared the gospel with him and he accepted Jesus as his savior.

You should have heard how excited Mario became! He made a conference call to his friend so I could tell him myself.

The update I received on what has recently been happening with Mario got me excited. Its almost a Joseph story! He has gotten another promotion, he is now the manager of the company, he is buying his first home. He is engaged to be married to the most beautiful woman in the world (his words) . Mario was on what is called a high profile parole where he is on parole a much longer time and is monitored closely . He was doing so well they have discharged him from his parole early

We ended our call with him telling me, "Brother God is so good". I had a tear in my eye as I hung up the phone.

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: All Chaplains associated with the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department jail system , work on a strictly volunteer basis. There is a :
: complete adherence to the separation of Church and State . So as a form of disclaimer, I wish to clearly state this newsletter in no :
: way represents the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. I work with the Sheriff's Department in the spirit of cooperation for the :
: purpose of serving the men and women incarcerated in the Los Angeles County Jail system . The county in no way compensates us :
: for what we do as Chaplains. My support comes solely from donations made to send me as a missionary to the incarcerated . :
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Phone: (909) 519-2216
Email:
ed@prisonkey.org
or
ejwelsh@lasd.org
Web Site
www.prisonkey.org



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