

Jesus Is The Key Ministries



Isaiah 61:1

Volume 6, Issue 1

April 2006

I know it has been far too long since I last wrote a newsletter. I have had people sending notes wanting to know if everything is alright, am I still doing the ministry. I realized I must take the time and put something on paper letting everyone know what has been going on.

It isn't that there haven't been things to write about, we have been more than busy. And I am not really trying to use that as the excuse as to why I haven't written before now either. So now I just need to tell all of you what has been happening.

As I sat here thinking on what has been happening it makes me think of a verse from Lamentations 3:21-26

*21 This I recall to my mind,
Therefore I have hope.*

*22 Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed,
Because His compassions fail not.*

23 They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness.

*24 "The LORD is my portion," says my soul,
"Therefore I hope in Him!"*

Newsletter

Chaplain Ed Welsh

*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**

Lamentations 3:21-26

25 The LORD is good to those who wait for Him, To the soul who seeks Him.

26 It is good that one should hope and wait quietly For the salvation of the LORD.

I have a lot of hope when I think back on all that the Lord has done and continues to do. He has always been faithful even when I haven't. He has opened many doors, provided our needs and best of all allowed me to be part of this ministry that I love so much.

Looking back on this past year it is amazing to see all that has happened. For one thing this past year has become the most productive year for supplying Bibles to jail. Thanks to generous donations from some churches and individual donors more Bibles passed out than in any other year since I have been at Men's Central.

Over the Mothers day weekend Bel Air Presbyterian Church is planning to have their first annual Bible drive for the jail. I feel sure the Lord is going to bless it with many more Bibles and by the end of this year we will have been able to pass out even more Bibles than we did this past year. God prom-

ises us that His word will not come back void. So the way I see it maybe not every one of the Bibles passed out represents someone who has been saved, but it does represent someone who has been given the gospel message and then a Bible to follow up on it for themselves.

It is amazing to me when I stop to realize that I am into my sixth year at the jail. And there are always new challenges to overcome, as well as many old battles we have to continue to re-fight.

I assume that most of you had heard about the recent violence that went on down at the jail. Actually throughout the whole county system. Here is a small quote from a recent LA Times article: March 18, 2006

"MEN'S CENTRAL JAIL IN downtown L.A. is a dark, depressing box that is home to hundreds of violent inmates. The cells are sealed with old-fashioned, hand-crank-operated steel gates that look like they could have been used at Alcatraz. The elevators don't work. The cells are built in rows, so it's impossible for guards to see into all of them without continually walking up and down the aisles. If a misbehaving inmate gets pepper sprayed, the chemical often travels through the ventilation

system and causes sore eyes and burning lungs throughout the building.

Nobody ever said a trip to jail was supposed to be fun. But in L.A. County, it's needlessly dangerous or even deadly. Just this winter, more than 150 inmates have been injured and two have died in violent altercations. In the last 2 1/2 years, 10 jail inmates have been killed by other inmates. The rest endure miserable, overcrowded conditions that have prompted numerous lawsuits, including a class-action suit now underway in U.S. District Court over floor sleeping. The lawsuit could cost the county as much as \$100 million."

The violence has been a terrible thing, it is awful the way they can be to each other. Its all the more reason why they need the Gospel message. With the heart of it being love not hatred and violence.

During the riots, I had to call a man into my office to tell him that his mother had passed away. As I have said many times in these news letters, having to give death notifications is the hardest part of the job. This one turned into one that was really difficult because this man had been banged up pretty good in the riots a few days earlier and when

Lamentations 3:21-26 (continued)

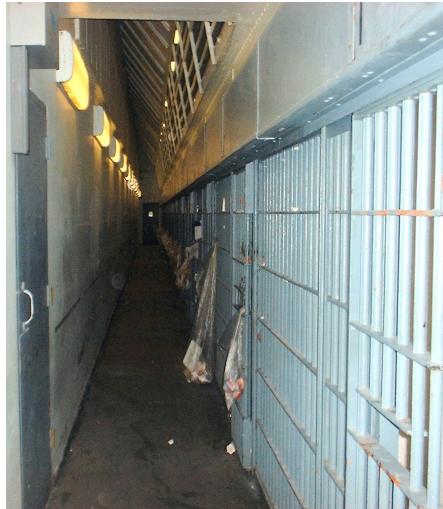
he walked into my office his face was all swollen with two black eyes. Whenever a man is called to my office and they haven't requested to see me, they already have a good idea that they are being called there for some bad news. You could see the worry in his eyes as he sat there waiting to hear what I had to tell him. The white of his eyes were full of blood from his bruised eyes. Very quickly they were full of tears as I explained to him that his mother had died earlier that day from a heart attack. In the many reactions I have seen over the years I had never seen such anger and grief. He was convinced that she had died because of him. That she had literally worried herself to death because of him being in there during what was happening. Now I don't know if that is what helped cause her heart attack or not but I do know he believed it was the reason.

We spent the next couple hours talking. I have learned to try to remain quite and let them do most of the talking. It is good for them to get it out before they have to go back to their cells. I try to see if they are going to be alright to go back to their cell and not either hurt themselves or some one else with all the emotion built up within them.

As is always the case it makes it so much easier if the one who has passed is a believer and even better yet when the inmate is a believer too. This was one of those times and as we talked, I tried to continually point him back to the Lord and His promises in His word. It is an amazing thing to behold when you see the Lord touch someone's heart. This man started off angry and bitter at what had happened. But after pointing him to the word trying to just give him hope and comfort, I watched as the Lord min-

istered to that man and there was a transformation. I now heard him saying he wanted to do what his mother would want him to do. He was not going to be ruled by hatred, but instead promised to look to the Lord for his strength. By the end of our conversation I was very blessed to have been there to see what the Lord did in his heart that day.

As the article in the Times says there are many things about the conditions in there that are bad. I just experienced the other day the pepper spray because of the ventilation system, it happens often.



Trash hangs in plastic bags from the men's cell doors. They have to eat their meals in their cells. The deputies can't let them out to the chow halls because of the potential for violence.

These conditions are not going to get better any time soon. A few years ago I brought a group of church leaders on a tour of Men's Central and one of them had a comment of how they need to tear the place down. Its too bad that we have to have jails at all but the reality of it is we need jails and prisons to protect ourselves from the predators of the world.

All you heard listening to the news reports was that the jail is out of control and a lot of the blame game goes on. The truth is every Sheriff Deputy is doing the work of two. I was amazed at how well they kept control of things during a very difficult time.

One way that the conditions have started to get better is that our ability to minister in the jail has greatly increased. The department has started to work with us much better than ever before. We are getting more people out for counseling, Bible studies and services.

It's true that we reap what we sow and they may deserve to be in there but they also deserve to be told about Jesus. We are all sinners saved by the God's grace. With the increased Bibles and the added department cooperation we have a better chance than ever before to reach the inmates with the message of the Gospel.

Please keep the men and the deputies of Men's Central in your prayers.



There are two more bunks on the opposite wall that make up this 6 man cell. On the "old side" built in the 60's there are 6, 4 and single man cells. On the "new side" addition that was built in the mid 70's there are also 6, 4 and 1 man cells but they also have dorms that house many men in one large room. The deputies have to be very careful where everyone is placed.

Get Out of Your Comfort Zone

Note : I have tried in past newsletters to have different volunteers write something from their perspective about prison ministry. The following article is by Claudio Alfaro from Calvary Chapel Pomona Valley. He is the "BrownCard" which means he is responsible for escorting the group into the prison. **Ed**

The prison ministry has been such a blessing in my life, though prior to entering the prison for the first time, I was a bit apprehensive. Nevertheless, I went in and was greatly blessed, the Holy Spirit had gone ahead of us and prepared the way. I am so grateful to the Lord for allowing me to serve Him in such manner.

It has been over 2 years since Chaplain Ed Welsh took our group into the prison. Ed shared the message the first 2 times, and he told us (the group) " eventually you should begin sharing the message."

"Eventually" to me meant 6 months to 1 year later. After the second time we went in, Chaplain Ed

said, "Ok, who's giving the message next time?" *Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season.* 2 Timothy 4:2 Needless to say, I had to get out of my comfort zone. Although a bit painful, it has been beneficial to my walk with the Lord.

I recall it was a warm Friday night in September, we were in the Chapel in the West Yard. I'm reading through my notes on the message I was going to give that night. The prisoners are lined up getting searched before entering the Chapel. That night would be the first time I had taught a message to a group other than my 2nd & 3rd grade Sunday school class.

I am now looking at a group of about sixty-five men, I began to share the message, I was so nervous that I started sweating profusely. Even though I stumbled through the message, the Holy Spirit was faithful to get me through and the prisoners were very supportive. It was a humbling experience.

The prison yards have Chapels, where we share the Word of God and interact with the prisoners, which can be anywhere from 50 to 150 men. I have seen a lot of these men who are at the end of themselves and realize, as the apostles did, that only Jesus Christ has the words of eternal life.

Currently, our ministry is at the California Institute for Men in Chino. We go in on the 1st and 3rd Fridays to the West Yard and 2nd Sunday of the month to the Minimum Yard.

If you are reading this article, I implore you to please pray for all the men and women in prison, and for their families, and for the prison ministry, that we may continue to have open doors to bring the Word of God.

To God be all the praise, honor & glory.

Please Pray for the CIM Ministry

Most of you may recall that in January 2005 a guard at CIM was stabbed to death by an inmate. The guard's name is Manuel A. Gonzalez Jr. He was a 16-year employee of the corrections department and had been working at the Chino prison since February 1996. He had five children. In any ones way of thinking what happened was a real tragedy. But I don't think anyone realized at the time just how far reaching the consequences of it would be.

Not long after the murder there was a second thing that happened that has also negatively impacted the institution at least when it comes to ministry. The State Chaplain, Chaplain Palmer was in the Reserves and was called up to active duty to become the Chaplain at Guantanamo

Bay, Cuba.

His replacement was a man they called out of retirement who could only do the job part time. Of course the result was and is that all Christian programs have really gone down hill in the past year.

As a result of the murder all of the upper level management of CIM was replaced. When ever there is a change at the top, everything changes with it. And in the case of all religious programs they have really taken a hit. They changed the way the inmates are counted and feed in the evening and because of that the inmates don't get out the way they used to for the Chapel services.

For instance a few weeks ago we arrived at the prison at 6:30 on Friday

night. We are supposed to start out service on West yard at 7:00. The inmates didn't even get in the Chapel till 8:30 and we have to end at 8:45! All we could do was read a verse out of the Bible and then pray with them. Its no wonder that many other ministries have just given up on going in.

Well the good news is Chaplain Palmer came back last week and I will be meeting with him in the next few days.

Please pray for the Chaplain and the task ahead to try and turn things around. Pray that the administration has a change of heart and starts to be supportive of the religious programs.

Psalms 18:2

Note: Bel Air Presbyterian Church, as part of its Urban Missions Ministry a program called "Inmate Connections", sends volunteers into Juvenile Halls, Jails, Prisons and partner with ministries like ours. Bel Air Presbyterians Inmate Connections leader is Greg Smart, who has been a faithful volunteer and supporter of this ministry. Here Greg expresses his passion for reaching the lost wherever they may be found.

Ed

Each week arriving at the jail to teach a Bible study I realize how crazy it would have been to imagine this being part of my life 5 years ago. But now I am certain that I would be half empty without Inmate Ministry in my life. Blessings from the Lord come in mysterious ways; often I find that it is me whose life is enriched by serving as a *Jesus is the Key* Bible Teacher in Men's Central Jail. I go to give the inmates the gospel and in the process the Lord ministers to my heart!

For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food.
Hebrews 5:12

It is funny how a life in Christ has not really begun until you get your rear out of the pew and into the "streets". I can remember when I first stepped out of the pew, starting with small outreaches, like an hour or two at one of skid rows missions.

Looking back, I realize that these types of service opportunities are just "milk" ministry, or ministry projects designed for new believers... I now comprehend that the real "meat" service opportunities are in places like the jails; places where society has turned their

backs to the people in them, places where you need to commit long term, places that limited people understand the need to serve, a place where Satan has a stronghold. Satan has already been defeated at the cross and that message needs to go to all who are in bondage.

Galatians 5:12 says we will reap what we sow. I am not a "bleeding heart" about those poor people in jail, but I do know they need to hear about Jesus to change their hearts. Just like I needed to hear the Gospel in my white upper class Church. Whether we need a drop of Christ's blood or a bucket, without it the horizon is not so bright.

It is such a blessing that Jesus is the Key Ministries is there as a light in a very dark place, helping to point the way to the only way to really be free. Without Jesus is the Key, MCJ would have limited Bibles and other Christian materials as resources to serve the inmates. Those who support this ministry are ... *Visiting Christ while He is in prison.* (Matthew 25:36)

Without you who stand beside this ministry these programs would not be possible in Men's Central Jail or many other local facilities they go to.

It brings tears to my eyes to know that so many lives in other local penal facilities can't get a Bible. It stuns me that in Los Angeles Jails the Chaplin's are all volunteers, their salaries and any of the materials they hand out need to be acquired through donation. All because of the politically correct possession of "separation of church and state".

It amazes me the amount of Bibles the supporters of Jesus is the Key hand out at MCJ. I wish the Church as a whole would mobilize as the

hands and feet of Christ and take ownership of providing the needed materials to cover every man women and child in the LA penal system with a Bible and other Christian materials needed to disciple them.

What a simple dream. Would it not be nice if we could use this ministry to achieve that task county wide; not just in Men's Central Jail?

Look out over Christendom today; do you see an abundance of pride? At my home Church I witness "Christians" who want to turn their back on Inmates. They mutter, why should I help them, they are getting what they deserve.

The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, "God, I thank You that I am not like other men... Luke 18:11

Maybe so, maybe it is best that they be locked up. Yet, does that mean they do not deserve the love of Christ? What does it say about the Church when missionaries in our penal system can't pay their bills because the Church has turned there back on that mission field? Does it say that we in the Churches are more worthy of Christ's love or that we just don't get the Gospel?

I believe it is our duty to share with the Church that we feel the need to rally behind ministries like Jesus is the Key, not merely give a courteous smile and ignore the need of the hearts of the broken!

But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need , and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God

Outreach

Because of the length of time since the last newsletter much has gone on that I haven't reported on. One of the big events was the outreaches we did with the German ministry Nu Start at the end of the year. They were here for sixteen days and we were able to go to four prisons , plus Men's Central Jail, witnessing on Hollywood Blvd., and travel to Mexico where we went to two prisons and also went to two orphanage.

I enjoyed myself so much , everything worked well. From the host families who housed them while they were here to the individual outreaches, nothing went wrong. Now when does anything work without a hitch? When the Lord is in it! And He truly was in it. And what a blessing it was.

The first outreach we did was to the women's prison, CIW. It was more than amazing. By the time it was over the women were up on their feet dancing and praising the Lord. I wish I had thought ahead of time to arrange for pictures because as it turned out it was the one place we weren't able to take any.

The team from Germany was so much fun to be with. Everything they did was with boldness of spirit. I found out the first time we were out together what it was going to be like. We had go out to a restaurant, All 20 of us. As the food came instead of praying for our food the choir did a praise song thanking the Lord for all His blessings. Then if that wasn't enough, at the end of the meal they asked the restaurant manager if they could sing for everyone. It was amazing, the whole place stopped as they praised the Lord in song and after they were done most people applauded.

It was all great but the highlight of the time with them for me was the five days we spent in Mexico. We

went to Tecate Longo men's prison, the high security prison for Baja. The team had spent a year practicing for the trip to sing in the different languages and that is what truly touch the men. Before it was over these hard core inmates were up and dancing in praise.



They let us bring in food to share with the men. In that way they were fed both body and spirit.



There was an inmate doing time there who was from Israel. He spoke a number of languages and he ended up helping us with doing translation, He spoke Spanish, English and German so it worked out well. The Lord truly does provide. When Solo from the German team gave the alter call many responded.



One of the memories that really sticks out to me was when I left the area to go use the rest room one of the inmates followed me out and wanted to talk to me. Only problem was I don't speak Spanish. Well the Lord took care of that for me. One of the volunteers saw me leaving and also followed me out, he had been nervous to go on his own but needed to use the restroom too. You guessed it he spoke Spanish. The inmate was in tears and wanted to be comforted. George shared the gospel with him and lead him to the Lord.



The other prison we went to while in Mexico was to La Mesa prison. We spent the day with the women prisoners in the renovated new facility they have put together to now separate the women from the male population. What a great improvement that has been!



During our stay in Mexico we stayed at La Posada del Calvario, the mission ministry of Calvary Chapel Montebello. The overseer of the ministry Pastor Victor went with us and was the one who gave the main message and altar call.

(Continued on next page)



The Word doesn't come back void and there were many hearts touched that day.

The faces in these next few pictures say it better than I can what it means to them and how it touches their hearts.

A picture is suppose to be worth a 1,000 words so with these pictures I hope it speaks volumes to you.



The door is open to go back to Mexico. While we were there I had the chance to meet the director of the prisons in Baja and we have been invited to go do the same thing at all four of their prisons in an explained way. I am working on putting something together.

There are also plans for a summer outreach to do another outreach at our local women's prison, CIW.



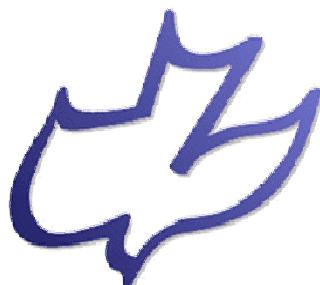
Some of the pastors I met while working on the Billy Graham Crusade asked me to come be a part of some outreaches to the Apache Indian Reservation in San Carlos, Arizona. I know its not a jail ministry but the need is great there too. There are many forms of bondage. The Drug and Alcohol problem on the Reservation is terrible. They have gang problems, teen pregnancy, on and on. Hopelessness takes many forms. And the message of hope that the gospel bring is really the only answer. I leave again this week end for my third trip to San Carlos .

For those of you that pray for me, thank you so much, I feel your prayers, especially at times like these.



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. Our support comes solely from donations made to send us as a missionary to the incarcerated .

Phone: 909- 519-2216
Email:
ed@prisonkey.org
or
ejwelsh@lasd.org
Web Site
www.prisonkey.org



Tax Deductible Donations

can be made out to:
Jesus is the Key Ministries
32 33 Grand Avenue
Suite : N - 71
Chino Hills, California
91709
501 (c) 3 nonprofit corporation