

INNER COMMUNITY TIMES

The Church Behind the Prison Wall

Second Quarter 2008
Vacaville, California

Thankful

by George R.

As I begin to write, I am outside, sitting at a concrete picnic table and when I look up my view is of rolling, green hills. That might be the loveliest aspect of this place; the hills. They might be ordinary to most, but for a Christian man housed here at the state prison, the hills which loom large just outside the prison walls are not only a beautiful sight to behold each day but they are also a reminder. They are a reminder of how awesome God is, of all He has brought me through and of the love and forgiveness He has for me. As Psalms 121 begins, *"I will lift up my eyes to the hills—from whence comes my help? My help comes from the Lord, who has made heaven and earth."* That is a prayer of thanksgiving I say every day and it is in thanksgiving that I always walk. I have been blessed tremendously here at CSP; it has been instrumental in my growth. We have a wonderful chapel program, a devoted

**A Brother in Christ at
California State Prison-Solano**

chaplain and dear brothers who love the Lord and care for one another. My walk with the Lord didn't start here

but it is being matured here and when I look up to those hills I think of all God has done for me in my life. I thank Him that He has saved me and I pray He will continue to show me His ways.

My name is George Alfred R., Jr.; I am thirty-three years old, in my eleventh year of incarceration on a twenty year sentence. Even those facts might surprise you if we were ever to meet face to face. After thirty-three years on earth, my boyish good looks and youthfulness cause many to guess I am still in my early twenties. Most would also never guess I've been in prison for eleven years either. I have no tattoos to speak of, I have never done any drugs and sometimes it

Heart of Compassion

by Lynne Gallaher

I can feel the presence of the Lord and I'm gonna get my blessing right now!" This is a verse in a song the choir sings at the prison and it states my feelings about prison ministry.

The joy of the Lord is present, His love and forgiveness are overflowing and everyone feels blessed that we can call Him Savior and Lord.

Several weeks before Easter, a friend of mine who is involved with *ebenezer outreach ministry*, kept asking me to "just come to choir practice one night." My response was that even though I loved to sing, I was too busy and singing in a prison was something I was too fearful to do. Well, one night was all it took before I was hooked. The Lord spoke to me in a powerful way, "Fear not, for I am with you." It was time for me to trust God in this area and He has given me total peace.

I look forward to going each time because it is such a huge blessing worshipping with the men and other choir members. There are many men and women behind bars who have a genuine love for God and His Word. They are seeking Him daily and are sincere prayer warriors.

One night Kim Moreno, our choir director, asked me to share something with the men. This was very difficult for me because I was



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Life Changing Conversions

Haven't you often heard it said that God is up to something? Today, in several prisons where we minister, God is truly up to something. Having spoken with several brothers in Christ locked inside prison walls; they have discussed what is happening in the maturing of Christians and the many men coming to the knowledge of Christ. Many who resisted hearing the Gospel message in the past are now acknowledging God, desiring to live a Christian life.

Also, in speaking with the Chaplains and other volunteer ministers they are also saying revival is taking place in the prisons. The men are now serving the Lord with a greater fever than the fever in which they had committed their crimes. They realize the love, forgiveness and grace Jesus has given to them.

With that I was reminded of a prophetic word given by Bill Yount in 1996, which stated that God's treasures were locked up...

God's question made me restless. "Bill, where on earth does man keep his most priceless treasures and valuables?" I said, "Lord, usually these treasures like gold, silver, diamonds, and precious jewels are kept locked up somewhere out of sight usually with guards and security to keep them under lock and key." God spoke. "Like man, my most valuable treasures on earth are also locked up."



Reverend Timothy and Katie May

I then saw Jesus standing in front of seemingly thousands of prisons and jails. The Lord said, "These have almost been destroyed by the enemy, but these ones have the greatest potential to be used and to bring forth glory to My name. Tell MY people, I am going this hour to the prisons to activate the gifts and callings that lie dormant in these lives that were given before the foundation of the earth."

"Out from these walls will come forth an Army of Spiritual Giants who will have the power to literally kick down the gates of Hell and overcome satanic powers that are holding many of My own people bound in My own house. Tell My people that great treasure is behind these walls in these forgotten vessels. My people must come forth and touch these ones, for a mighty anointing will be unleashed upon these for future victory in My kingdom. **THEY MUST BE RESTORED.**"

I then saw the Lord step up to the prison doors with a key. One key fit every lock and the gates began to open. I then heard and saw great explosions, which sounded like dynamite going off behind the walls. It sounded like an all-out spiritual warfare. Jesus turned and said, "Tell My people to go in now and pick up the spoil and rescue these." Jesus then began walking in and touching inmates who were thronging Him. Many being touched instantly began to have a golden glow come over them. God spoke to me, "THERE'S THE GOLD!" Others had a silver glow around them. God said, "THERE'S THE SILVER!" Like slow motion they began to grow into what appeared to be giant knights in warrior-like armor. They had on the entire amour of God...

This prophecy brought to my mind the vision God gave me twelve years ago, that ten thousand men would be worshiping Him, the population of California State Prison-Solano (CSP-Solano) and California Medical Facility-Vacaville. Today we and other ministries have an opportunity to minister in these facilities and realize the vision is coming to pass, and I live with anticipation to see this vision realized.

In California, specifically at CSP-Solano, with the Solano Demonstration Project we see men coming to know the knowledge of Christ and gaining access to the Word of God as part of a faith-based program which

will allow their lives to be radically changed.

This project began with a seven-hour seminar titled, *Self Esteem by God's Design*, taught by Dr. Larry and Gail Day. As the Days shared their personal testimonies many of the men were engaged, some who have never participated in prior programs, some who were believers, some of different faiths, and those who had no faith beliefs at all. Several men shared with Larry and Gail they had held back their tears, it was hard to sit in class and not cry as the Day's revealed the truth, these men were created in the image of God and that forgiveness was theirs if they received Jesus as Savior and Lord of their lives.

The Day's seminar also included the following topics: uncovering issues of self-esteem; the basis of self-worth; understanding emotional issues, including anger; becoming a better manager of ones anger; emotions, and feelings; understanding choices in prison and upon parole; how to respond in a correct manner; and changing your belief system.

In addition to the Day's seminar, two classes/seminars began this month; *Great Dads* presented by Dave Dove, facilitated by Prison Fellowship and *Second Wind*; and *Purpose Driven Life* presented by Pastor Tim, facilitated by the *ebenezer* team.

In my opinion, there are three major components of the Solano Demonstration Project: 1) The vital role of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation providing the inmates with the following: education, mental health issues, job skills, and parole issues; 2) The faith-based portion of the project provided by *ebenezer outreach ministry*; 3) Our Lord, who will complete the process by transforming the mind, body and spirit of the men who are participating in the project. So, my opening question of God is up to something isn't true; God is transforming lives in prison and throughout the world.

Our musical component had several opportunities to minister these past few months:

Joyful Expressions ministered in song and Word at our regular weekly services to the men of California State Prison-Solano and Sierra Conservation Center-Jamestown, and on a monthly basis, the *ebenezer* team ministers to the young men at the Sacramento County Boys Ranch in Sacramento. For more information about youth ministry please see the article

on Page 5, written by Nancy Gould. Pastor Tim had an opportunity to minister to the men behind the walls at California State Prison-Folsom and spoke to the congregation of New Hope Christian Church, Vacaville, California, and John Haaf conducted Sunday services at the California Medical Facility, Vacaville, California.

One Voice Praise Choir Freedom Tour ministered to the men of San Quentin Prison twice this quarter, once with Pastor Pat Vandenburg, senior pastor of The Father's House Church in Lena, Illinois, (<http://www.tfhlena.org>) and the second time with Pastor Tim. While Pastor Pat was visiting the prison he graciously donated a case of his recently released book titled, *A Knock on the Door*, to the chapel at San Quentin.

Production Team:

Pastor Kim Moreno, Choir Director; Rudy Aguardo and David O'Guinn, Sound

One Voice Praise Choir and Joyful Expressions Members:

Carolina Aguardo, Aiesha Apointe, Bill Barr, Janet Hartwell-Brown, Marlee Certini, Sandy Evans, Lynne Gallaher, Nancy Gould, Judith Handa, Ron Handa, Jeanne Havlicek, Lucille Lamb, Tim May, Judy Moran, Norbert Moreno, Larry Newson, Peggy Preece, Pastor Jolene Queen, Verna Ringler, Jacqueline Robnett, Jeanne Schultz, Carolyn Sheehan, De Val Smith, Tonya Stanton, Daryl Stewart, and Kathey Van Buskirk

Weekly Ministry and Outreach:

Pastor Russell Crooks, Carol Davis, Pastor Alfred DeGree, Linda Fowler, Dan Gamel, Donna Haaf, John Haaf, Sol Irving, Pastor Kenneth Love, Katie May, Pastor Daniel McCann, David Michael, Antonio Saldana, Pastor Larry Shaw, Arthuretta Williams-Smith, Pastor Eddie Thomas, and Pastor Stuart Welch

Churches Involved:

Please check out our website for a complete listing of churches involved with this ministry: www.ebrock.org

looks as though I haven’t even done eleven months in prison. As for my twenty year sentence, most figure I was either framed, got a raw deal or was some sort of computer hacker. None of those are the case, in fact, I committed a very brutal, violent crime and my sentence was not only deserved and warranted but was one in which mercy was given.

Early on in county jail while I was still going to court I knew God’s hand was working in my life. To this day I still know it. I would liken it to Joseph and his brothers (Genesis 50:20). Where I had meant evil at the time I committed my crime, in the aftermath God was working it out to bring good. In all of my selfishness, stupidity and stubbornness God was going to break me and bring me to a point where I had to rest wholly and completely in Him. I couldn’t tell you how I got my first Bible in county jail, who it came from or where I got it but getting my hands on one and digging into God’s Word was and is vital to my life and salvation. It all started in county jail and the best part is that He continues to mold me, teach me and guide me. Most importantly, He has never stopped loving me. Through God’s Word He reveals His absolute love and truth to me and for one who has been forgiven much, I wake up every day thankful.

I grew up a good Catholic boy, was an altar boy of altar boys and was never in any kind of trouble prior to my crime. Growing up, I knew what religion was but it was not until county jail that I accepted Jesus Christ into my heart, began a relationship with Him, and knew what true fellowship with my Lord and Savior was like. Oh, it’s been a process. I can be very thick-headed, but over the years God’s Word, discipline and love brought me closer and closer to Him and day by day, moment by moment, verse by verse, He is shaping me into who He wants me to be. Thankfully I am still growing in His grace and knowledge. My relationship with God started early on in my incarceration, it has grown over the years and it is renewed early each morning as I begin each day in prayer, fellowship and Bible study.

God continues to work on me. I am in no way perfect but I am happy and thankful to say I am not the man I was when I committed my crime. Through God’s love I am being built up. I used to be a man of rituals and traditions and at times I still struggle

with the notion I have to earn God’s love, forgiveness and salvation. At times I still think there are things I need to do to make up for the wrongs I have done. If that were the case, I would never have any rest! What is so important to remember and what I have to drill into my head is that salvation is not based on my performance but is based solely on everything Jesus Christ did on Calvary. He paid it all! Thank you Jesus! If I had to pick a couple of verses to illustrate this, it would be Ephesians 2:8-10, *“For it is by grace you have been saved through faith; and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God; not by works so that no one can boast. For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”*

Even in prison, or more appropriately, especially in prison, it is easy to be thankful. I know where I’ve been and I know what I’ve done, but I also know where I’m going. Of course I know what I can look forward to outside of prison, but what’s even more exciting is the kind of future hope spoken in I Peter 1:4, *“and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you.”*

I stay in God’s Word, I stand on His truths, and I strive to be all I can be in Christ Jesus, and praise God, there is not only a wonderful present but an excellent future as well.

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Youth Worship Team Update

by Nancy Gould

The *Youth Worship Team* has been busy these past two months, involved in music ministry at the Sacramento Boys Ranch along with other special events. In April, the team led worship for a Prison Fellowship/Second Wind *VIP Training* at Capital Christian Center in Sacramento. This training is offered at various times throughout the year for those who have the desire to serve God in prison ministry. It was a privilege to lead this group of future volunteers in worship of our Lord, who calls us all to visit those in prison and give a cup of water in His name.

During the training session a report was given by Mike Carrington, who is Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger's Assistant Undersecretary for Faith-Based Programs and Re-Entry Programs. Mr. Carrington gave an overview of the revolutionary new programs planned for state prisons in which churches and other faith-based organizations will have the opportunity to step up to the plate in the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation's (CDCR) efforts to focus on the "R" in its title. This report, produced by the Rehabilitation Strike Team, may be viewed on the CDCR's website: <http://www.cdcr.ca.gov/News/StrikeTeams/html>, (use "View Full Report" link). The most exciting part of the announcement made by Mr. Carrington is that *ebenezer outreach ministry* will be closely involved in the unveiling of this program at California State Prison-Solano (CSP-Solano). It is a great opportunity for our team members to be involved in the ministry at such a time as this!

In May, the worship team returned to the Sacramento Boys Ranch for its regular Sunday morning worship service. Our speaker, Dan Gamel, gave a moving message for the boys. Dan has been

establishing a close relationship with many of the young men through a weekly Bible study for the Boys Ranch on Thursday nights. They are beginning to understand what it means to really live for Christ in their current situation. They ask probing questions during our time with them on Sundays, which shows they are really counting the cost of following the

Lord. The worship team is always amazed by how the boys enter into worship and sense the Lord's presence.

Also in May, our worship team had the opportunity to participate in an event sponsored by Pastor Stuart Welch's church, the American Canyon

Family Resource Center, (<http://americancanyonfrfc.org>). Pastor Stuart is a member of the *ebenezer* team and a frequent speaker at CSP-Solano's Tuesday night chapel services, and his church has a heart for outreach to its community as well. Every year they host a "Grocery Give Away" to bless those in financial crisis in the community. Our worship team, along with several other individuals and groups, ministered with songs of encouragement and praise. As the book of James puts it, "This is religion, pure and undefiled," to give to those in need of their daily bread, and our team was overjoyed at the opportunity to be part of this outreach.

Our team is looking forward to other such opportunities in the future, and we are always thankful to be used by God to minister in music to believers in the Body of Christ on both sides of prison walls.

*Nancy is a member of One Voice Praise Choir and Youth Director for **ebenezer outreach ministry**; Nancy attends Providence Community Church in Vacaville, California.*



Forgiving Brings Forgiveness

by Anthony L.

My name is Anthony L. and I am a born-again Christian. I have a twenty year sentence for multiple counts of second-degree robbery. Coming to prison for these crimes was the best thing to ever happen to me. I would like to share with you my story, a journey from hell, due to a violent criminal lifestyle, alcohol abuse and drug addiction, to the warm arms of my Father in heaven, thanks to His Son, my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

This story is about forgiveness; it begins in 1987, which was the year I was first put behind bars. Sadly, I didn't learn my lesson;

this is my fourth commitment in prison. I was a very hard headed, self-destructive young man. My wife and I met at the age of twelve; she is a very important part of this story. We are forty years old now, yes, we have been together for a long time. Together we have four grown children, three boys and one girl.

I sold drugs most of my teenage years and adult life, other crimes came along with this type of street activity. I would be out all night, chasing money, full of alcohol and drugs. Looking back on it now, I was like a demon working for the Devil, looking for trouble and finding it. I was causing heartache and pain to others and neglecting my family. I was a terrible son, a terrible husband, and a terrible father. I could have done better; I could have been a better human being!

In 2001, I started using drugs heavily. I left my wife and children for over two years. I used crack cocaine, methamphetamines and heroin, basically I was killing myself. My past criminal upbringing made it easy for me to keep money in my pocket. I never ran out of drugs, therefore, I kept a lot of drug addict friends and women around me, some of them turned out to be enemies of mine. Drugs will make people do crazy things; they will also make

women do crazy things.

At the end of it all I was arrested for sixteen counts of second-degree robbery. In the middle of fighting my case I surrendered my life to God. It was too much for me to take on by myself and I knew what I had to do. So I dropped to my knees and asked for forgiveness. Soon after I asked the Lord to save me from my own madness, I found out that my wife was the one who turned me in to the police. The police didn't know my identity but they knew my mode of operation. My emotions went from anger to shock, back to anger, then sadness. At the end of the day I put those emotions aside. I had to get past that so God could start His healing. I had hope, I had the Holy Spirit to calm the storm inside me, and I had forgiveness.

I have never felt the power of forgiveness before. I never really wanted to or had to forgive anyone before. In this case I had to forgive my wife, God's Word says so. It wasn't as easy as it sounds. I had to take a good look at myself; I had to put my pride aside along with my old way of thinking.

Forgiving my wife brought me a long way in my faith, drawing me closer to God. My wife needed my forgiveness more than I did; she started to fall apart on me, especially after I received a sentence of twenty years. I found myself counseling her on a regular basis helping her put things back together. The children

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needed her and so did I. She has always been a strong woman but this brought her down hard. After opening her eyes to see things from a different view she started to bounce back. You see, I could have been found dead in the streets or worse, I could have taken someone else’s life. What if my children were to follow my path? There are a lot of things that could have happened to me other than this. To be honest it’s not like I didn’t do anything wrong. I did commit those crimes. Do you know the saying, “a hard head makes a soft behind,” well my hard head was about to put me in a soft grave with no salvation.

I believe God was in control the whole time and when I didn’t calm down on my own He used my wife to calm me down in her own way. Whatever the case may be, I am a better person today. I am a better son, a better husband and a better father. Above all else I am a born-again Christian today and forever.

Feel that we can be forgiven, no matter what we had thought or done.

Feel truly to forgive others, no matter how deep we felt they have wronged us.

Feel all around forgiveness is needed. Be able to receive forgiveness and give it too.

Forgiving brings forgiveness.

My wife, Lynette, and I are still happily married and are still in love with each other.

The Basics of Grace

by Nikola M.

I thank God for this moment, I thank God for life, breath and for everything He gives to us. I thank God for my life exactly as it is. I am in no conflict nor am I anxious for anything. God has opened my eyes and my heart to a new reality where I live this new life with continuous gratitude. Nothing new or different needs to happen to enrich my life. My life is already complete in every way, and in Christ is my completeness.

When I first got arrested, to me it was like dying and I became aware how my loved ones; family, friends, and neighbors were coming to my funeral. I was forty-nine years old and this was the first time ever to be in any kind of trouble with the law. I was married with a younger daughter living with us, five years earlier at the age of eighteen my oldest daughter was kicked out of the house by my wife. I had a painting business and my wife had a good job with the County. Life appeared to be good in every way, we attended Catholic Mass on Sunday (for all the wrong reasons) but we did not have a relationship with the Living God. We were good, decent people, and then I hurt my wife.

A Brother in Christ at California State Prison-Solano

When I first contacted my neighbor (an older Christian woman) after my arrest and told her about my spiritual direction, she said, “God works in mysterious ways.” Today I understand the meaning of my neighbor’s words and I am a living example of how God can change and completely transform a man.

I grew up in a nice Catholic family in a small village of Croatia; communism was the system which ruled our people at the time of my childhood. God and anything godly was discouraged for school children. In becoming a young man, I chose secular school teachings and rejected my parents Catholic teachings. Denying God for many years I placed myself on the throne of my own destiny.

Soon after my sentencing and imprisonment I understood that now was the time for me to pursue and to live a spiritual life. Spiritual life for me at that time was anything that had to do with peace and feeling good. I attended Catholic Mass, Seventh Day Adventist meetings, Buddhist meditation, and Bible teaching Christian services with Chaplain Carl Specht. For me, reading and studying the Bible was a whole new language, I call it “Biblical English.” Chaplain Carl was the ideal man to show

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“Grace” continued from page 7

me the way to Jesus. I am far from understanding this new language but I thank God for what He has done in my life already.

God kept on guiding me, molding me and opening new doors for me with His love. Gradually one by one I stopped attending all the other services. I got baptized in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit, today I have a relationship with the Living God. I have learned enough to know that no man, no church, no religion, can earn us our salvation, *“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.”* (Ephesians 2:8). Jesus is the way, in Him my peace is complete, my sins are forgiven, cleansed by His blood, and my salvation is secured by the power of His love. He has made me a new man. I am in prison but I am not a prisoner, Jesus has set me free. For the rest of my life I pray God would use me as His servant. In whatever capacity God can use me I will joyfully with gratitude serve Him.

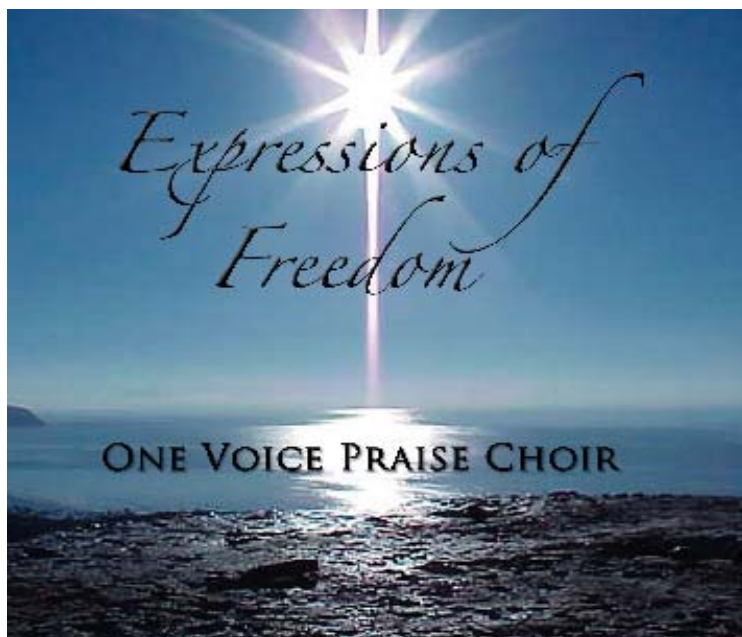
This new life in Christ is the greatest life ever, despite my imprisonment and losing everything I had worked hard for many years to acquire. This is the life of giving, loving and being compassionate to others needs. I am practicing to live a selfless life and I am not waiting to get out of prison to start living my Christian way. I am living it right here, right now. My God had been so good to me; my cup is always overflowing, filled with God’s grace, mercy and His

unconditional love. I tell people that today is the best day of my life (that’s every day) when they ask me how I am. Puzzled, they want to know how can that be, my answer is, “I am alive and Christ lives in me.” I would have never chosen to come to prison but if this was the only way to accept Christ as my Lord and Savior then I thank God for my imprisonment. It may be difficult for someone to understand how a man in prison can be as free as I am, but praise and glory be to God, for my freedom comes from God.

I pray God’s will to be done in my life and to give me the courage to carry out His will with gratitude. If I rejoice any more I may think I am in heaven instead of being in prison. God is good to me and I love living in obedience to His will. Jesus tells us in Matthew 11:28-30, *“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”* And the burden is definitely light for those who trust in Jesus.

I can no longer imagine my life serving other gods, which I had many prior to surrendering my life to God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. I welcome this opportunity to write my short testimony, hopefully it can help someone who is as lost and as misdirected as I was.

“Grace” continued on page 9



This is the choir’s first release; you may purchase a copy of this CD by sending a check or money order to **ebenezer outreach ministry**, 3069 Alamo Drive, PMB 145, Vacaville CA 95687-6344 or on our website www.ebrock.org using Pay Pal

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\$18.00

“Grace” continued from page 8

What a mighty and loving God we serve, no one is ever turned away who seek Him, *“For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.”* (Philippians 1:21).

There is no looking back, there is no going back, I have a new family now, a family of Christian brothers. *“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”* (Galatians 3:2).

I celebrate my life daily; I share with other men the gifts God gives to me. I am learning to love those who are difficult to love. I thank God for loving me exactly as I am, so that I can love others exactly as they are, but I must hate all sins including my sins. *“Changes have come; I am a new man today. God got hold of me, He loved me, and God loves me. He loves me completely and sent His Son to die for a wretch like me”* (this is the choir’s new song-*Changes Have Come*)

A miracle, it is nothing less than a miracle that is taking place all around us all the time. God sustains and directs our universe and everything in it and trusting in God I rest, patiently I wait, comfort and peace are always present in an obedient heart. The riches I am experiencing in my life at this time are beyond logic, they are precious riches and God is the source of all my wealth. God is good and I am enslaved to the Master whom I love. I serve God always in here and now with all the abilities He has given to me. It has been revealed to me and I believe that I can trust God completely in the biggest and in the minutest aspects of my living. My life and my death are in His care. My parents, children, siblings, friends, relatives, my shelter, health, food, my future, and everything needed for life I entrust it all in God’s care.

I am free, by God’s grace I have been saved, life is no longer about me, daily to self I die and with my living I glorify God. *“So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.”* (1 Corinthians 10:31). Even in the most basic things of life, we are challenged to choose Christ and His honor. Thank you God for loving me.

“What do you desire in your life?”
Ask anyone and he will probably say,
“Happiness.” Other people and things that might
create some happiness,
are often fleeting and soon vanish.
There is only One who never changes.
If you seek Him, God is always there meeting all
your needs as He promises.

*“But seek first the kingdom of God and His
righteousness,
and all these things shall be added to you.”*
(Matthew 6:33)

SING WITH JOY

Your aim, you say, in life is “happiness.”
I give you that and more besides.
I add to that, love, joy, peace,
all the fruit of the Spirit,
that your reflection might be of Me.
People will see this in you and will want
that relationship with the Father of us all,
the Creator from whom all good things come.
It’s My joy in you which will
make you sing a new song from your heart,
a song of joy expressed in
loving sacrifice to Me.
You will know with your heart
joy that begins with Me and
spreads to all who would know Me.

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Featured Ministry Team Member

Linda Fowler

When did you first become involved with prison ministry?

I first became involved with prison ministry in 1995; I had the opportunity to participate in a Sunday evening chapel service at San Quentin State Prison.

Why do you choose to stay involved with prison ministry?

I have chosen to stay involved with prison ministry because God's Word tells me that I am to visit those in prison, and this is where He has given me the peace to serve. No other area of ministry has had the pull on my heart as prison ministry, and I feel this is where I am currently best suited.

What is your favorite aspect of prison ministry i.e., weekly services, choir, small group outreach teams, traveling, also do you have a favorite facility/prison?

My favorite aspect of prison ministry has been conducting weekly Bible study at the West Contra Costa County Detention Facility; participating in the weekly chapel services at California State Prison-Solano with *ebenezer outreach ministry*; and being involved with Bill Glass, Champions for Life, this ministry holds weekend outreach programs nationwide.

What would you tell others about prison ministry that they may want to be involved?

I would tell others that it is a life-changing experience. You come to understand that people really can change through the power of God's Word, plus you have the opportunity to see these changes. What better way to experience His blessings then to see them first hand.



Briefly describe what ministry (if any) you are involved in at your home church?

I am involved in a monthly outreach to San Francisco, feeding the homeless, with City International Ministries. I like to participate with on-going events at church, but unfortunately, with working and volunteering two evenings each week in prison and jail ministry, I don't have a lot of time for other areas of ministry.

Share a specific testimony or insight that has affected you?

There have been many instances that have truly touched me, but one stands out. In my weekly Bible study I became acquainted with a woman who was facing very serious charges that could have sent

her to prison for a very long time.

From the time of her arrest, she knew things had to change in her life. Most importantly, she had fallen away from her relationship with Christ, had a substance

abuse problem that needed to be addressed and broken relationships with her family. During her 360 days in county jail, she completely surrendered

her life to Christ, making such a notable change even the Deputies commented on it to me.

Her complete surrender and change, allowed for forgiveness from the victim's family, she was given five-years probation. Since her release, she has attended anger management classes, reported on time to her probation officer, became an active member of her church, gotten married, became a grandmother, and now is ready and hoping to give support to others in jail.

Linda and her family attend Calvary Community Church, Benicia, California; she has been a member of the ministry team since 2005.

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Becoming One

by Judy Moran

Having been a member of *One Voice Praise Choir* for a number of years, I have often heard Pastor Tim and our choir director, Kim Moreno, tell us we are family. The longer I am a member of this choir; the feelings of family unity have definitely grown. We share all of our concerns and joys and are particularly united in the mission of pointing the way to the Cross and Jesus Christ. None of us take our mission lightly and we consider the awesome experience of worshipping with the inmates a privilege. Some of the sweetest times of worship I ever experienced have been when we are worshipping behind the prison walls. It constantly amazes me



that there is no place on earth out of God's presence; it truly does flow like a river.

The choir holds practice during Christmas, Easter, and summer, apart from these times we do not get together for practice. During choir practice, conversation is kept at a minimum. It was with the thought of getting to know each other better that a group of us started getting together prior to choir practice on Thursday nights for coffee and some conversation. It started with three people and has grown to about eight or ten. We have so enjoyed our

time together we have invited others in the choir to join us. This time before practice is one of the better parts of my week and I jealously guard it.

Due to the growth of the group and the onslaught of inclement weather the group, that started at Starbucks, then moved to Peet's Coffee and Tea, once again have moved to Panera Bakery for the warmth, change of scenery and for the delicious food served there. During our time together we laugh, talk, discuss, converse, and have a great time. The hour or so prior to choir practice goes all too quickly and conversations have to be cut short in order to make it to practice on time.

The outcome of this time we have spent together in idle conversation has strengthened our bonds with each other and like any family; you are only united if you work at becoming one in mind, body and spirit. It is our goal to be that family united in God and each other.

Judy has been part of One Voice Praise Choir since 2004; she and her family attend the Mission in Vacaville, California.

very emotional but God helped me through. I shared Jeremiah 31:3, *The Lord appeared to us in the past, saying: “I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving kindness.”* God’s love will last forever and we are all equal at the foot of the cross. Not only are we loved, but as Psalm 139:14 says, *“I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.”* His thoughts about us are too numerous to count as in Psalm 40:5, *“Many, O Lord my God, are the wonders you have done. The things you planned for us no one can recount to you; were I to speak and tell of them, they would be too*

many to declare.” They are like the sand, for each grain of sand, God is thinking about us – He is so good!

God has given me a heart of compassion for these men. I believe many of them have had painful childhoods and never felt loved which has led them to where they are now. We need to see them, and others, as Christ does, as His precious children. Won’t it be awesome, one day, for all of us who are believers, to be worshipping our Savior for eternity! We have that hope, that one day we will spend eternity together. There will be no more heartache and pain. There will be no more loneliness or ugliness of this world. We will be forgiven

and we will be in the presence of our Almighty Lord!

Lynn Gallaher joined the choir this year; she and her husband, Senior Pastor Bruce Gallaher attend Crossroads Christian Church, Vacaville, California.

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