

Prison Ministries Report

August 13, 2010

Since the sex offender's bill was passed into law about two months ago, it has been a challenging time to find a place for many of the men to find a place to stay. All the new law did was spread these men out making it a challenge for the state employees to monitor them and offer the help they may need. Our ministry has been crimped. It is also hard for the men who are just getting out to find a transitional place to live. Aphasis House is in compliance with this new law now.

Our new halfway house should be ready for occupancy within a two-week period. This will give us three (3) houses - two in Rayon City and one on Graycroft Dr. here in Madison. Please find on the other side of this paper a list of things we could use to help get the new house ready for habitation. If you can help in any way with either materials or a donation (so that we can buy the materials), it would greatly speed up the process of finalization, so that we can make a temporary home for some of these men. God has blessed these men with ambition and a spirit of creative initiative. They so much desire to resume a new and normal citizenship and became members of some assembly (church). Your past and continuing help and support has made this possible.

I am now on the Steering Committee for a new function in Prison Fellowship Ministries (founded by Chuck Colson). The new organization is an offshoot of the OUT4LIFE Ministries. It called the *Nashville Reentry Collaborative*. I know these names are a lot to digest, but the exciting thing is this: We hope to have in place soon, a collaboration of church groups and faith sharing members who will be available to meet men & women in the middle Tennessee area when they get out of prison. That is, we want to have someone meet them at the door when they're released. They would take them to their transitional housing, get them some clothing and toiletries, make sure they have some transportation (bus passes?), and, maybe, buy them their first "free world" meal. It's a big plan, but we've already put some of this in motion on a small scale. We're starting small, but eventually we hope to have the entire state zoned by zip code so that when someone is released, we'll have someone there to minister to them (maybe mentor), and take them to where they have to go and live. Since the majority of these men and women have no support at all (having been deserted by family, friends and relatives), it makes this ministry all the more important. Please pray.

On Wednesday night (August 11) this week six of our St. Joseph parishioners went to Riverbend Prison to sign up men who have children for the Angel Tree Program. Angel Tree was started by Mary Kay Beard, a reformed ex-con whose notoriety included expertise in safe cracking and many other things and at one time was on the FBI's Ten Most Wanted List. She had promised that when she left prison, she would remember the family members, in this case the children, of the men and women who were still incarcerated. This she did, and although the copyright for *Angel Tree* was held by Prison Fellowship, it is now gladly shared with the Salvation Army and anyone who wants to use it.

These men's children will now be remembered at Christmas with a gift that will be given by Prison Fellowship Ministries in their name with a personal message to each child that was written by the prisoners himself. Not only that, but we had a chance to pray with those men who wanted to share a prayer, and we were able to identify ourselves as Catholics. We received some good questions from some of the men, and some even showed some interest in exploring the Faith. With that in mind, we may beg some of you in the future to volunteer to help wrap and deliver some of these presents, probably at the end of November or early December.

To express my gratitude for all the help and donations so many of you have made would be insufficient. Please know that God will continue pour out His blessings and graces on our parish, a people that has answered the call to "feed the hungry, clothe the naked...visit the imprisoned".

Praise God from whom all blessings flow.

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