

Prison  
Ministry

# Freedom Through Truth

October 2005

## From the Pen of Chaplain Baggett



### Faith Based Honor Dorm

**A**labama currently has a Faith Based Honor Dorm in every major prison in the state. Some are doing extremely well, others just exist. As with any effort, some officers and administrative leaders believe the program is good and others believe that it is just another program this is used by inmates to try to “get over” on the staff.

We’re lucky at Limestone in that we have great support and encouragement from the Warden down to most of our CO I’s. In this camp, it is generally believed that the Honor Dorms are a win-win situation for all concerned. It’s good for DOC because much of the cost for operating these dorms is provided by religious volunteers, especially the sponsors of these dorms. It’s good for maintenance because the inmates housed in these dorms understand that it is a special privilege, and thus they or more inclined to “take care” of things. It’s good for security staff because generally speaking, these inmates are better behaved, understanding that poor conduct will result in their being moved out of the dorms. It’s also good for the inmates because it provides a better, cleaner, more organized and safer environment in which to live. It affords them special opportunities that are not available in other dorms.

Finally, it’s much better for the religious volunteer because it provides a better teaching environment. In the Honor Dorms, there is a chance to really work to get those who are truly interested in their spiritual development to become *rooted and grounded in the faith*. And after all, isn’t this the real purpose of our being religious volunteers.

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# A Woman's Point of View

Inspiration From the  
Men in White

“**W**hat is it like when you go out to Limestone Correctional Facility?” That is a question I have heard several times since I became involved with the Prison Ministry. My answer is simple – it is inspiring. When I first came to the prison for Family Night in Dorm 16, I wondered what I would do or say. Would my efforts at conversation be awkward and unacceptable? I soon found out there was nothing for me to worry about. The Men in White made it very easy for me. They accepted my presence as a gift. Having someone to ask about their thoughts and feelings was seen as a blessing. Their humility and thankfulness was in turn humbling and inspiring to me. I realized that something which took so little of my time brought great joy, and it was a lesson in humility for me. Each time I return for Family Night or the Gospel Meeting, I am inspired by the love for the Lord which is evident in the lives of these men. I have to question my own life. Do I rely on God as much as I should, or do I let my independence in the “free world” make me feel self-sufficient? Is my love for the Lord evident to others? The Men in White inspire me to let my light shine a little brighter each day, to thank God daily for His blessings, and to always be ready to give an account for the hope that is in me. I look forward to my next opportunity to visit the Men in White.

*(Patti Bill – Madison Church of Christ)*

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## HONOR DORMS A BLESSING

*The Madison Church of Christ recently received the following e—mail regarding its sponsorship of Faith Based Honor Dorm 16:*

“I wanted to let the people at your church know how much I appreciate this ministry. We have a foster son who is an inmate at LCF and has been placed in the dorm you sponsor . From the things he reports to me, this dorm is a blessing not only for the inmates there, but for concerned families aw well. Thank you so much for caring. God bless”

Many consider how to minister to inmates in prison, and we are blessed to have Christian men and women that will do just that. There are those that minister in various ways – all of which benefit greatly ... and which bring a great deal of change.

# The Other Side of the Coin

One thing I notice as an inmate of nearly 24 years, is that great emphasis is placed on getting people to accept Christ – and on Christ adding them to the church. It is, no doubt, very joyous for all Christians to see a conversion.

For me, however, there is a greater joy in seeing a person **remain** a Christian. I don't even want to debate at which point we can consider a man or woman fallen from the faith – or how far they can go into sin before they are lost. All I know is that Christians bear certain fruit. And all of us KNOW when a Christian acts like a Christian. And while that may seem the same for all concerned – it is a bit different living as a Christian in prison. And STAYING a Christian in prison is not always the easiest thing in the world.

In prison all of the religions you can imagine are compacted into a small area – where every man or woman imprisoned is seeking out an identity. Many come to the chapel seeking that identity in religion – while others choose gangs. People all want to belong, and to seem significant to someone ... to feel loved and accepted. This is especially true for those that cannot find this in their families that they can no longer be with.

When all of you go home from your times of ministry here – those of us that ARE Christians in prison, must work with those “*younger*” than we are in the Lord, to make certain that they know the right choices to make. We must work with them to know that they know where to go for those answers ... and we must teach them to identify with the body of Christ here in prison. Yet too few that are baptized believers know HOW to lead men in this fashion. Many know how to make the right decisions – yet don't know how to direct others to do so. Many Christians don't even know how they are supposed to define the congregation in prison – since there are no obvious elders and deacons. Are we just a group of Christians that simply meet to worship – or is this a church?

Often what “freeworld” Christians may take as obvious truth, does not seem so obvious to men here. And that is what I feel is my responsibility as a Christian in prison. To pick up where all of you leave off – and to take men to the next step. Or sometimes it is to help a man tear away all of the religious fallacy in his life – so he is open to the gospel when you preach it.

God gives us all a job to do. Some plant, and some water ... but God gives the increase. Those of us that are Christians in prison covet your prayers. The place that you come to as a mission field is our “home” for now. When you have to leave, we will still be here working. And we are blessed to share your labors in the Lord. (*Bro. Connolly—Limestone Prison Church of Christ*)

# Our Brothers in the Special Unit

One of the highlights of my weekend is meeting with my brothers in Christ in the “Special Unit” at the Limestone Correctional Facility. I have come to realize that few free-world religious volunteers venture into the Special Unit. Many have expressed concerns about hugging, touching, or being near these men because of fear that they may be adversely affected. And yet these Men in White long for contact, for free-world people to visit and spend time with them.

This special ministry began following our Madison Church of Christ Gospel meeting in August 2004. During our three-day meeting, 10 men from the Special Unit were baptized. About a dozen have been baptized into the Lord since then. Several have already been released from Limestone, others are about to go home. We cannot follow up with every one that leaves, but our best wishes, hopes and prayers go with all of them. We have planted the seed and spent much time watering. We pray that God will grant continual growth. Sadly, a few of those that remain have become unfaithful. But the faithful Men in White labor with me continuously to bring the straying brothers back into the light once again.

About 15 brothers and I meet every Saturday afternoon for a few hours of spiritual fellowship, Bible study, and prayer. Many hours are also spent in personal study and individual counseling. Unlike most of the other classes taught at Limestone, attendance is not mandatory, but entirely voluntary. This underscores their commitment and love for Christ and offers great encouragement to me.

My main goals are to strengthen all brothers in the Faith; encourage them to be loving, kind, compassionate, patient, forgiving, and merciful with each other; and to “teach them to observe all things whatsoever Jesus has commanded”. A number of the brothers meet often during the week to read the Bible, study, and pray together.

A few weeks ago, Alabama was to play on TV later in the afternoon. I considered cutting our study short, but was immediately “chastised” by one of the brothers for even