



Prison  
Ministry

# Freedom Through Truth

June—July 2008

## From the Pen of Chaplain Baggett



### Pre-Release

There is a major movement underway in the Alabama Department of Corrections, one that is considerably overdue. Pre-Release is a program whose time has come. For many years we have seen some activity in this area, two or three days devoted to discussions about the problems inmates might face when they were released. Some of these programs were good and some not so good. One thing, there just wasn't enough time to really develop the information that needed to be passed on to these folks in white as they were leaving prison.

Things have changed. The Pre-release program at Limestone is a 120 day program that is filled with classes ranging from the spiritual to practical, everyday information needed to 'make it' in the 'free world.' Mitzi Johnson is the director of the Pre-release program here at Limestone, and is doing an excellent job. Ms. Johnson brings a wealth of experience to this position, having worked for many years in various treatment programs. She has put together a program that we're all excited about. The only negative note in any of this for us is our failure to get NewLife Behavior included as a part of the curriculum. However, we have an great relationship with Ms. Johnson, and hope that perhaps in the not to distant future we'll be able to add this to an already powerful program.

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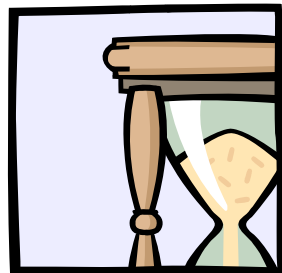
This is a new, exciting opportunity for all religious volunteers to move to a new level of work with corrections. We need tutors, educators, mentors who can work with the inmates now, and are willing to make a commitment to work with them when they are released.

For years the religious community has talked about what we could do if...well, that times has come. The doors are wide open. Are we going to take advantage of it or will we just sit idly by and wait till someone 'asks us.' If you want to be involved, make your voice heard.  
(Chaplain Charles E. Baggett )

## THE FULLNESS OF THE TIME

*Ga 4:4 --- But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son . . . .*  
(NKJV)

Sometimes the things we want to do have little chance of success until the time is right. The time is not right because the prerequisites for success do not exist. It might be that more preparation is required or perhaps preparations have been made but there is a period of waiting for the preparations to bear fruit. It is not a matter of waiting for a certain day on the calendar to arrive or of waiting for a certain number of ticks on the clock to transpire. The wise will know when the time is right by observing the signs of the times. I find these ideas powerfully demonstrated by what is going on in the Alabama Department of Corrections.



The outcome of a variety of forces at work in Alabama over the past several years, including the honor dorm pioneering work of Chaplain Baggett, has led the Alabama Department of Corrections to issue Administration Regulation 460 (AR460). AR460 establishes the responsibilities, policies, and procedures for Faith/Character Based programs (FCBP). This regulation makes it mandatory for each prison in the state to establish and maintain a faith/character based program. Of particular note for purposes of this article, there is now a requirement for the establishment of a curriculum of courses, and each inmate who chooses to live in an honor dorm must take three of these courses each trimester and attend at least two worship services each week.

This has greatly increased the “demand” for religious volunteers. Did you notice the change in tone from just a few years ago? A few years ago, many people who desired to enter a corrections facility to do ministry would often be met with insurmountable challenges from some wardens and or chaplains. Now the warden and chaplain are mandated to establish these programs and they need “all the help they can get” to comply with the mandate. The system is ready for people with quality programs to “come on board.”

At Limestone this mandate involved more change than could be handled at once. This trimester we have increased the class enrollments from the previous one per trimester to two per trimester for all honor dorm inmates. This was accomplished using existing volunteers and asking them to teach two sessions of their course back to back. To go to three courses per student next trimester, more volunteers are needed. Volunteers can start out as assistants to established instructors and will have plenty of time to become comfortable with doing the work before being asked to teach on their own. It doesn't take long to learn that you can do effective ministry on your own using the NewLife Behavior series of prepared lessons.

I think I can say that most volunteers do prison ministry to help the inmates because they know Jesus wants the inmates to be helped. But there is a huge personal blessing available to prison ministry workers, especially the younger ones still raising a family. The learning that comes from teaching the NewLife Behavior series together with the contact with the broken lives of the inmates will educate, equip and motivate one to raise his family in the nurture and admonition of the Lord like few other experiences I know.

We also have worship service time slots that need to be filled as well. We may need to do an additional service on Sunday but also there are empty weekday services time slots to fill. These would be conducted along the order of a typical midweek Bible study, devotional or “prayer meeting.” If we do not fill these slots the call will go out for others to fill them. Remember, these activities are now mandated. Again, besides ministering to the inmates, this is an excellent opportunity for the young to learn to teach, lead, and preach. And you can practice with a very appreciative audience. That kind of education is hard to find at any price.

I never expected to see the day when a dorm of 400 inmates would be visited every day by a steady stream of prison ministers from morning until late evening but

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that is exactly what is occurring at Limestone these days.

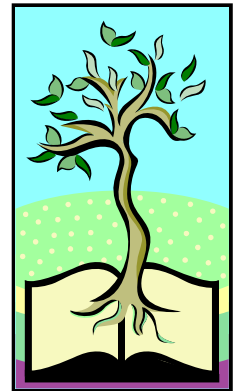
Is the time right for you to take advantage of this most wonderful training ground for ministry and this wide open opportunity to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ?

*(Sam Drake , Volunteer Assistant Chaplain, Madison Church of Christ)*

## **Honor Dorm Begins Second Trimester Classes**

**T**he recent publication of ADOC Administrative Regulation 460 gave us opportunity for doubling the number of honor dorm classes this trimester. This is the first phase toward full implementation of the AR which envisions three classes each week for every honor dorm resident. We were at a real advantage to move quickly since we already had the NewLife Behavior Curriculum which is made to order to fulfill the AR requirements. But with opportunities there always seems to be challenges. All things were ready to go on 13 May, the first day of class, when we were notified that the warden had made certain decisions which would prohibit the use of our main chapel and the auxiliary chapel for honor dorm classes. That cut the number of our classrooms in half. We had to quickly reconfigure our schedule to provide all the classes in the library, chapel and chow hall in Dorm H. To get all the classes in we had to go from teaching honor dorm classes two days a week to teaching five days a week. There is one logistical advantage to this in that it is much easier for the volunteers to go to Dorm H than for all the inmates to go to the main chapel area.

The church of Christ has 23 volunteers teaching 27 classes each week this trimester. 23 of the classes are NewLife Behavior. In addition Life Skills, The Book of Romans and two Basic Computer Classes are being taught. Several of our volunteers are doing “double duty” by teaching two classes each week. This is a great work and we can’t adequately express our appreciation to the volunteers for the time and effort they put into this ministry. We have volunteers from as far away as Fayetteville, TN, Elkmont, AL, and the Shoals.



*(Bill Edwards, Volunteer Assistant Chaplain, Madison Church of Christ)*

## UNIVERSITY COMMENCEMENT

It won't be long and there will be thirteen men graduating here with Bible college degrees. Two of them will receive Doctorates, and three will receive Masters degrees. The date of the graduation will be June 28<sup>th</sup>, and it will be held in the LCF chapel beginning at 3 p.m.

Most may not even know that there is a Bible college conducting classes here at Limestone Correctional Facility. After all, the men involved don't publicize it much. That's because for them its not even really about the degree as much as it is about learning from the Bible. Christian Life School of Theology, and Beacon University have been conducting classes here since around 1999. At times we have had as many as 39 people involved – and the men have studied everything from Biblical languages to Christian counseling. Not only have these thirteen men persevered, but they have done so with excellence – most keeping between a 3.5, and 4.0 average in their grades.

Amazing as well is the fact that the men who have completed these degree have done so in addition to their normal job and routines that keep them busy here. Classes often required ten hours of lectures on Saturdays and Sundays, with language papers often being written as long as 30 pages. These men wanted to break the mold ... to be more than what most believed that they could be. And we believe that if they have not already done so, they are well on their way!

We are thankful to those that have assisted these men in this endeavor – and those who have sponsored these men on this arduous journey. And we are thankful that these men did not give up along the way, but persevered ... We know that God will bless them for their efforts.

*(Bro. Rodney, LCF)*



## Go Surfing This Weekend

Have you seen the NewLife Behavior Ministries new web site? Go to <http://nlbm.org/>.

Check out NewLife Behavior International at <http://www.nlbintl.org/>.

For jail and prison ministry supplies and materials go to Unbound Word at <http://www.unboundword.com/>.

For an update of Prison Ministires around the state go to the NewLife Behavior Network of Alabama website at <http://alabamalbnetwork.homestead.com/index.html>.

## The Governor and Inmate Rehabilitation and Reentry

Governor Riley says that Alabama has a problem that the state can't solve but you and I can. The Alabama Department of Corrections releases more than 11,000 inmates a year. At the present recidivism rate over 3000 will soon return. Governor Riley states: *Repeat offenders are a concern to us all and a tremendous burden on our society. The rehabilitation of an ex-offender can be a challenging endeavor that takes vision, willingness to embrace new ideas, unwavering persistence, and a lot of hard work. It also requires genuine partnerships that leverage our strengths, spiritual fortitude, and creativity.* With this in mind, Governor Riley has established a new initiative, the Community Partnership for Recovery and Reentry. It's called the CPR Network. The idea is to establish a statewide network of churches, volunteer groups and other resources that can provide a helping hand to inmates returning to the free world. The vision of the network is that every individual released from Alabama correctional facilities and criminal justice system supervision and their families have the tools and support needed to become law-abiding, productive citizens, able to participate in build-

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ing healthy and safe communities.

To kick off his new initiative the Governor hosted the first Alabama Governor's Reentry Summit on May 20, 2008 in Montgomery. In addition to the Governor, the agenda included Richard Allen, ADOC Commissioner; Cynthia Dillard, Board of Pardons and Parole; Lisa Castaldo, Governor's Office of Faith Based & Community Initiatives; Bill Johnson, Director, Alabama Department of Economic & Community Affairs, and a host of representatives of reentry programs telling the success stories of their organizations.

Over 750 concerned citizens from across Alabama attended the meeting. More than twenty prison ministry workers from churches of Christ in North Alabama Gathered at the Roebuck Parkway Church Building in Birmingham accepting their invitation to ride their bus to Montgomery. This group was made up of members from Rainbow, Roebuck Parkway, Fort Payne, Madison, and Highland Park churches of Christ. Limestone Correctional Facility prison ministry workers attending were: Jim Hiley, Sam Drake and Bill Edwards from Madison and Grant and Sheila Azbell from Highland Park.

There are upcoming regional meetings to further develop this initiative. To learn more about the CPR Network and identify the regions and schedule of meetings go to [alabamacprnetwork.com](http://alabamacprnetwork.com). I encourage you to learn more about this program and to get involved. *(Bill Edwards, Volunteer Assistant Chaplain, Madison Church of Christ)*

This is the group of more than twenty prison ministry workers that rode the Roebuck Parkway church bus to the Governors Reentry Summit in Montgomery. The group was made up of members from Roebuck Parkway, Rainbow, Fort Payne, Highland Park and Madison churches.



**BAPTISMS TO DATE AT LIMESTONE CORRECTIONAL FACILITY  
FOR 2008 – 35**

Its not too early to start  
planning to attend the **THIRD  
ANNUAL PRISON/JAIL MINIS-  
TRY WORKSHOP** sponsored by  
the *NewLife Behavior Network*



*of Alabama.* The workshop will be held on  
**February 20-21 2009** at the Roebuck  
Parkway Church of Christ in Birmingham,  
Alabama. We will keep you updated!



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