



Freedom Through Truth

MARCH - APRIL 2008

From the Pen of Chaplain Baggett



Special Events

Every year, throughout the nation, there are programs being provided to help assist the jail and prison workers. There are programs devoted to the particular problems of the incarcerated and their families such as Long Distance Dad's. Programs dealing with addictions of every sort, anger management and the list just goes on and on. The internet makes it possible for one to find where these programs are being conducted and the particulars of time and money that might be required. Many of these programs also provide college credit.

The Beltline Church of Christ hosted the Second Annual Southeastern Regional NewLife Behavior Prison / Jail Ministry workshop February 22 and 23. This event was attended by about 250 individuals involved in, or interested in, learning more about prison ministry and NewLife Behavior in particular. There were six states represented and over 70 congregations. Sunday, following the two day event, the Beltline congregation had a day of special recognition for Correctional professionals. Over 100 employees of the Department of Corrections were present for this service and for the meal that followed the morning worship service. Next year's event will be held at the Roebuck Parkway Church of Christ in Birmingham, Alabama.

Among members of the Church of Christ, an annual national workshop is conducted,

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usually the third week of June that last for a couple of days. This is generally attended by people from all parts of the United States, and even some other countries. This year the meeting will be in Detroit Michigan, June 11-13 with the Wyoming Av. Congregation as the host. This is an excellent time to see what is happening across the nation among members of the Church involved in jail/prison work.

Another excellent opportunity that is fast approaching will be held April 18th and 19th at the Gulf coast Church of Christ in Fort Myers, Florida. Friday will allow time for visiting some of the half-way houses in the area with the main event taking place on Saturday, April 19th. This writer will be a participant in that event.

Let me encourage everyone to become involved in one or more of these opportunities. Not only will you be motivated by the association with your peers, but you will find material and training that will help you to be more effective in the work you are doing in His service to men and women who are incarcerated. May God continue to bless you in your work. (*Chaplain Charles E. Baggett*)

New Day Dawning For Honor Dorms

Faith based honor dorms have been operating at Limestone Correctional Facility for more than eight years even though the Alabama Department of Corrections has never formally specified responsibilities, policies and procedures for their operations – until now. With new and increased emphasis on faith based programs, ADOC Commissioner Richard Allen has approved Administrative Regulation 460, dated March 4, 2008. This is an eighteen page document formalizing and standardizing faith/character based programs within the department. The entire regulation can be viewed on the DOC web site.

Because of the magnitude of the changes required, implementation will have to be phased over time. Some changes are already being implemented, for example, new forms, records and so on.

Another major change which will take place our next trimester beginning 13 May 2008 is the requirement for each honor dorm resident to attend two religious classes each week. Up until now he has only been required to attend one class each week. This, on the surface, seems like a minor change; however, it's a doubling of workload requiring more classroom space and twice the volunteer effort. Keep in mind

that the vast majority of the work in faith based programs is accomplished by religious volunteers. We are accomplishing this increased workload by trying to recruit more volunteers and by asking current volunteers to double their efforts.

This gives you the first glimpse of what is to come as a result of AR 460. Full implementation will be accomplished as soon as practicable. We consider this an opportunity to increase our efforts in presenting the Gospel of Christ to the men behind bars.

“He pled the cause of the afflicted and needy; then it was well. Is not that what it means to know me? Declares the Lord.” Jeremiah 22:16. (*Bill Edwards, Volunteer Assistant Chaplain at LCF, Madison Church of Christ*)

An Update From NLBNOA

The NewLife Behavior Network of Alabama (NLBNOA) is making huge leaps forward in its primary mission of establishing Bible classes in *every* penal facility in the state. A giant step appears imminent in the Federal Correctional Institution at Talladega. Other than the small minimum security camp at Maxwell AFB, this is the only federal prison in Alabama. This has been a major priority since NLBNOA was formed two years ago. Ron Goodman, who heads Federal Prison Outreach, a national prison ministry, attended this year’s Workshop at Beltline Church of Christ in Decatur. He gave the sermon at Beltline on Sunday. We asked Ron to help us at Talladega, and he got us an introduction through an influential chaplain friend of his in Washington. We were able to make an appointment with the Talladega chaplain and make a proposal for NLB classes there. The chaplain was cordial and receptive and liked what he saw in the NLB curriculum. We have been invited to their orientation dinner on May 13 and will be allowed to bring as many as ten volunteers with us. The Rainbow, Talladega, Ironaton and Trussville congregations will provide teachers.

The warden at the Camden WRC has given tentative approval for NLB classes. Danny Welker at Summerdale in Baldwin County travels to Camden each Sunday and preaches there. Danny has agreed to teach a Sunday afternoon class there, but he is planning on a couple of members at Camden taking the class. Teachers must go through the background check and orientation before classes can begin.

Tony Cleveland, deacon for the Rainbow jail ministry, reports 40 baptisms to date in 2008 at the Etowah County Detention Center. This is ahead of last year when

Rainbow had 121 conversions for the year there. Tony was also asked by the ECDC to begin another NLB class there. Tony has enlisted the Central Church of Christ in Gadsden to conduct this new class. This will make ten classes, 8 of them NLB, at the facility. Rainbow, Central, East Gadsden, Iglesia de Cristo at Collinsville and Glencoe teach at the ECDC.

Currently, we have proposals for NLB classes at the Alex City WRC and the Russell County Jail. We visited the Elba Church of Christ in March and talked with Ronnie Young, an elder, and Philip Box, the evangelist. Brother Young teaches a Bible class at 8 a. m. each Sunday morning at the Elba WRC. He is interested in NLB courses, and we proposed classes at the Coffee County Jail. We are also talking to contacts in Blount and Calhoun about classes in those counties. We continue to recommend strongly that you couple NLB classes with the Rainbow correspondence system. You will greatly increase the number of people you bring to Christ through using both. Denis Williams, Roebuck Parkway deacon for WBS, is now using the Rainbow system and is making some wonderful innovations which you will be hearing about soon. If you have any questions about the correspondence system, let us know. (raycox1927@bellsouth.net).The “fields are truly white unto harvest”! (*Ray Cox, State Director, NLBNOA*)

It Won't Help Them If You Do Not Get It to Them

Chaplin Baggett has often said that you can have the best designed, most brilliantly supported inmate training program in the world, but if you don't get into the prison to deliver it, it will not do the inmate any good. Perhaps this is more profound than it sounds. I often see critical needs being unmet because our standards for meeting that need cannot be satisfied. Sometimes the problem is the standards and not the resources as the following may illustrate.

I often come across inmates in my New Life Behavior classes who cannot read and their coping mechanisms have kept this fact well hidden. Over the years, I have developed the habit of trying to help the nonreaders feel comfortable in class. Nevertheless, because I knew that every honor dorm resident without a high school diploma is required, and has agreed, to pursue a furnished GED program, I assumed that their education problems were being adequately addressed and that it was just up to the inmate to dig in. However, in discussing this with a few nonreaders, I learned that the furnished GED

program assumes some ability to read that many do not have.

Through the New Life Behavior classes some of these students have gained a strong desire to read the Bible. This motivated me and led to many discussions among the dorm residents about the GED program and other reading programs available. Eventually I heard about the Central Alabama Laubach Literacy Council in Montgomery, AL from an inmate who had used the “Laubach Way to Reading” materials supplied by them. These materials were designed facing the reality that in resource-starved areas educators simply are not available. Prisons and third world countries were their target. I then learned that these materials have been used successfully at other correctional facilities in Alabama, so the way was smooth for introducing them at Limestone.

Several trustworthy inmates have asked to be involved in tutoring and the inmate in charge of GED tutoring has cooperated in sharing the available training rooms. Using funding from charitable organizations, the Central Alabama Laubach Literacy Council has supplied materials for the first wave of students. From my view, this kind of thing cannot happen in a committee. It takes involvement with the people you are trying to help.

And so we have had everything we needed all along. Somehow, I needed to recognize that it would not help if I could not deliver it before I could recognize what we already had and that it was better than what we had wanted. *(Sam Drake, Volunteer Assistant Chaplain at LCF, Madison Church of Christ)*

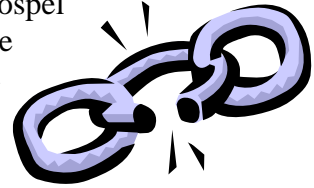
Born in Chains

Through the years, I have been greatly encouraged and blessed, being able to witness and assist with a great number of baptisms. Each baptism is an exciting event since it represents the birth of a child of God. Two baptisms, however, stand out and will linger in my mind for many years to come.

One of those memorable births took place in our Faith-based Honor-dorm four years ago. It was a hot Sunday afternoon in June. The air conditioner in the chapel could hardly keep up with the stifling heat and humidity. Most residents attending our assemblies came in their thinly-worn every-day uniforms, rather than their heavier “visitation” dress-uniforms. Dorms are not air-conditioned, and opportunities to escape to the relative coolness of the chapel, even for a little while, are always welcomed. Fol-

lowing that day's sermon, one precious soul responded. I had known this man for some time. Almost all of our conversations focused on God, and living for Jesus in a place filled with so much hatred and disregard for others. He always came to the services wearing his Sunday-best. After his public confession, I suggested that he take off all his clothing, except his undergarments. Becoming visibly frustrated, he responded "**No, I cannot wait that long, I am ready now**". He hurriedly climbed the few steps into the baptistry and practically jumped into the water, fully dressed, including socks and shoes. He was ready!

Until the day of his release, he never slowed down. He faithfully attended all services, participating in many ways. More than anything else, he seemed to enjoy leading our singing. Many things were remarkable about this brother, not the least was the fact that he had been a Muslim before becoming a Christian. He had been a "tough" Marine for six years, but his heart was tender and his demeanor gentle. His love for Christ and others was demonstrated on a daily basis. On special occasions, he would go through the dorm, asking for donations of "goodies", so that care packages could be distributed to those who had very little or nothing. He shared the Gospel with many fellow-inmates. Whenever they were ready to become Christians, he would bring them to me, so that they also could be "born again". I do not know where our brother is today, but he will always remain in my thoughts and prayers. Please pray that God will continue to bless and keep him.



Another memorable birth took place just last month. I had been studying with a resident in Disciplinary Lock-up for a few weeks. It was on a Sunday afternoon when he suddenly paused, looking straight into my eyes. Visibly troubled, he began to speak with a trembling voice: "**I know I am lost. I want to be saved. I must be baptized. Please help me!**" I rejoiced with him and assured him that I would make arrangements as soon as possible. Given his maximum-security status, I knew that it could take several days to receive approval from the Administration and to set up an appointment. Eight days passed before I was able to baptize him into Christ. Every inmate had to leave the gym and chapel area (even the Chaplain's runners). The area between the Lock-up dorm and the main Chapel was cleared of all inmates. Here he came, escorted by three officers, including a Captain and a Sergeant. His ankles and wrists were shackled, with an additional chain around his waist to secure his hands by his side. He was

not allowed to change into baptismal clothing. His chains could not be removed. His ability to walk and climb up steps was severely hampered. I needed assistance to lift him into and out of the baptistry. Completely soaked from top to bottom, he was escorted back to his cell, slowly hobbling through the chilly air.

I visited him in his cell twenty minutes later. He was smiling for the first time in a very long time. It was the happiest day in his life. His heavy burden of sin finally lifted, he felt free and at peace. A few weeks ago, our brother was moved to a maximum-security facility. I will probably never see him again, but I will always remember the unique circumstances surrounding his birth. He was literally “**born in chains**”. Please pray that God will continue to bless and keep him. *(Siegfried Bill, Assistant Chaplain at LCF, Madison Church of Christ)*

CONGRATULATIONS!

We are pleased to announce that Bill Edwards, volunteer chaplain for the Madison Church of Christ, has been selected as the support person of the 2nd quarter at Limestone Correctional Facility. Bill has been a religious volunteer here at Limestone for the past seven years and has served as a volunteer chaplain since April 1, 2004. His work in this camp is well known and greatly appreciated! *(Chaplain Charles Baggett, for the Staff)*

Out of the Mouth of Babes

A Sunday school teacher was speaking with a young boy in the class one day. The teacher asked the young man, “do you think Noah did a lot of fishing when he was in the ark”. The young boy promptly responded, “how could he? He only had two worms”.

**BAPTISMS TO DATE AT LIMESTONE CORRECTIONAL FACILITY
FOR 2008 – 31**

June 11-13, 2008
35th National Workshop Jail/Prison Ministry
Conference
Detroit, Michigan

Radisson Hotel Detroit-Livonia
17123 Laurel Park Drive North
Livonia, MI 48152
Telephone Number: 734-464-1300
www.prison-ministry-detroit.org

Hosted By
Wyoming Avenue Church of Christ
20131 Wyoming Avenue
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