

Release Through Jesus Prison Ministry

RTJ NEWSLETTER ISSUE NO. 14
February 2010

Dear Ministry Partner,

What a great year 2009 was for the ministry! Most pastors I know are trying to increase the size of their congregations. The congregations RTJ ministers to are getting larger but we wish they would get smaller. I'm sure you have noticed how much the prison system is in the news lately. With the layoff of guards and closing of some facilities I believe this ministry and others like ours are going to have an even greater opportunities for ministry in the prisons in 2010. Ministries that are teaching and preaching the salvation message, confirming it with sign and miracles, will have more chances to shine the light in the darkness of the criminal correction system.

What have we seen in 2009?

- New ideas and organizational skills in the administrative part of RTJ
- We have seen approximately 800 men and women receive Christ as their Savior
- Many men and women rededicating their lives to God
- Physical and spiritual healing at our special healing services
- New volunteers added to help in various areas of the ministry
- New Bible studies at Lawrenceville and Big Muddy

- New monthly services in Centralia CC
- Greater awareness and support of RTJ by churches, businesses, and individuals
- New participation in ministry at the Edgar County Jail by 3 of the churches nearby
- We are now ministering in 8 prisons
- Continued progress toward the establishment of a transitional home for women being released from prison.

With God's help, we have tried to fulfill our mission statement:

*RTJ - Taking Prisoners for Christ!
Release Through Jesus Prison Ministry enters all levels of confinement facilities to help men and women to know Jesus and lead them to salvation, to teach the men and women to hide the Word of God in their hearts so that they might sin no more, and to regularly visit churches of all Christian denominations to spread the good news of God's work with the incarcerated.*

Thank you for being a vital part of this ministry. We could not do this without you.
Jim Helton
Founder RTJ

Graham CC

Monday night Bible Study at Graham is going strong. We have been averaging about twenty men each week. We finished *Driven by Eternity* and are half-way through *Under Cover*. We have witnessed great progress and growth in the Spirit among the inmates who attend these studies. One man is a convert from Satanism. His growth has amazed me! (I wonder why it surprises us when God does what

He promises in His Word?) As always, I go in to be a blessing and come home having been blessed and enlightened. Eph. 3:20 "Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us."

May God bless and enlighten all His saints!
Bill Purcell



Life doesn't stand still.....

We know that circumstances change and people move around causing changes in address. The Postal Service will not forward mail indefinitely. Please send us your change of address with the form in this newsletter. Every newsletter returned to us is extra postage expense. Help us be good stewards of the ministry's finances and notify us of your change of address. Also, if you would rather receive the newsletter by email you may use the form and send your email address, or sign up online at the website on the back of this newsletter. That is additional postage savings. Thank you so much for your interest and support of RTJ Prison Ministry.

Decatur CC

Our year ending service was a few days after Christmas but the women sure enjoyed all the carols we sang. The Spirit of God was so faithful to minister to these girls as they sang and worshipped.

Paul Etherton and his wife Jill dressed up in costumes and put on several skits. Paul was Simon Peter and he pulled several girls out of the audience to act in the skits. The girls really were caught up in the reality of God's Word put into drama. The stories of the woman at the well and the woman caught in adultery were a few of the dramas portrayed by him and Jill. God's Word penetrated their hearts and many came forward for prayer. Three souls were added to the Kingdom of God that night.

Several of those girls started coming to our Monday night Bible studies, really searching for God's peace and direction for their lives. What a joy we all get for going into the prisons to minister. Thank you to all who pray for and support this ministry. These souls are also a part of your harvest.

Our Monday night Bible study is using the course *Honors Reward*. We were studying the

commandment to honor our father and mother. Many of the girls had a very bad home life of abuse by one or both parents. God asks us to forgive them and honor them so that our "days may be long." We explained that choosing to take care of parents and treat them in a godly way, unlike the way the children were treated, is a way in which Christ can be shown in them and break strongholds in their lives.

We talked about how Jesus came because we couldn't keep the law 100% of the time and that His blood covers us forever. One of the girls thought that if we failed the Ten Commandments that we would lose our salvation. A light bulb came on in her spirit as she realized the enemy had tricked her into constant condemnation because of issues she wrestled with. "Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." Thank God the Holy Spirit is constantly working in us. Let's all keep pressing toward the mark of Jesus Christ.

In Christ,
Kim Shealey

A Special Chance to Minister at Decatur CC

Our Chaplain at the Decatur Women's Prison called me early in December needing McDonald's \$5 gift cards and wrapping paper to help with gifts for the children who visit their imprisoned mothers. I made a few phone calls to some volunteers and supporters and we were able to collect 26 gift cards and 10 rolls of wrapping paper which we delivered to the prison.

Thank you to those who responded in spite of the short notice. Your generosity made a better Christmas for inmates and their children. God sees all those little "cups of water" given in Jesus' name.

In His service,
Kim Shealey

Pawnee Assemblies of God Missions Banquet

Jim was asked to attend the missions banquet at the Assembly of God church in Pawnee. He and John Cook, who ministers at the Taylorville Prison, received a very warm welcome as they shared what God is doing in prisons. They could really feel the enthusiasm and interest from everyone there. The dinner was great and the words from the pastor really hit home. Being real people that is what this ministry is all about and to hear the same words coming from Pastor Bennett were very encouraging. As the service ended Pastor Bennett had all of his congregation form a bridge and Jim and John walked through. Each member laid hands on and prayed for Jim and John. They spoke words of encouragement and wisdom. This was a night John and I will always remember. It was so encouraging just knowing men and women of God of this caliber will be praying for RTJ.



Pastor A.B. Bennett, John Cook, Jim Helton, Dennis Wise, Mission's Director at Pawnee Assemblies of God

Southern IL

On Mondays from 1 to 2:30 p.m., we have our chapel service at Lawrence Correctional Center. The first Monday, we had 37 in attendance. Our message was *Jesus Purchased our Redemption*. There were 19 who stood to pray a prayer of faith to make Jesus their LORD and Savior. God is so Good!!

On Tuesdays from 6 to 8 p.m., we have John Bevere Bible Study at Big Muddy River Correctional Center. We have had in the high 50's in attendance. The results have been very good with participation and acceptance of the curriculum.

On Thursday's from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m., we have John Bevere Bible Study at Centralia Correctional Center. Attendance is in the upper 20's and the men are enthusiastic with their participation.

On the first Friday from 6 to 8 p.m. and second Saturday 9 to 10:30 a.m., we are back to Big Muddy River Correctional Center, for Chapel Service. We have had in the high 30's in attendance. The LORD is meeting many needs through prayer for physical, spiritual, and financial needs.

On the first Sunday from 2 to 3 p.m., we have Chapel Service at Centralia Correctional Center. We have had in the high 50's in attendance. The results of the WORD of GOD in the lives of the men are evident, and their hunger for the WORD is amazing.

Please note the days and times of our meetings and remember us in prayer. We need prayer warriors. Praise the LORD!!!
Jerry Van Houtin, Sr.



John Cook as he moves through the prayer line. It took him 20 minutes to complete the line.

Taylorville CC

Greetings and blessings to all! We have kicked off a new year at Taylorville CC and started a new class of *The Purpose Driven Life*. We had a great discussion on what drives our lives and it really made me think about the driving force in my own life. According to Rick Warren, author of *The Purpose Driven Life*, most people are driven by one of five things; guilt, anger, material things, the need for approval, or fear. But I am sure there are others. I think at one time or another I have been driven by each of these. How about you? A lot of the inmates in our class seemed to agree. Anger and the need for approval seemed to top the list, but all of the other things were mentioned. The need for approval was my biggest one. I was 52 years old the first time I heard my father say, "I am proud of you, son." I believe that if some of these men, myself included, had blessings spoke over them as they were growing up that they would be in a different place. So we concluded the evening in agreement that we needed to be God-driven, not world-driven. I ask you, what drives your life?

Thank you to all who support this ministry. We are seeing lives changed to the glory of God.

In Christ,
Skip Renfro

Vandalia CC

We were asked to perform a special service for Christmas Eve. This was an "all call" service, meaning anyone who wanted to attend, could. There were 180 men at the service. The session opened with praise and worship with all the men joining in by singing their praise to the Lord.

The focus of the service was how we perceive the season. It's not about presents, Santa, or a tree. It's about the birth of the King. All these other things are not necessarily bad things, but we can be caught up in the stuff of the season and forget why we celebrate. We just lose our focus on the reason for the season. It's Jesus! It's how we spend our time in the celebration of His birthday. It's not about the season but living the life of celebration for Him daily.

The altar was opened with about 80 men coming up for prayer for themselves or their families. Charles Dickens said it best in his classic, *A Christmas Carol*. "And Scrooge kept Christmas in his heart all year round." We all should set the bar this high.

Blessings in Christ,
Steve Wright
Southern District Director

New Volunteers

You may have noticed the newsletter has a fresh, new look. Cheri Bassana and her staff at Before U Print Inc., in Mt. Zion, are donating their time and expertise to do the layout of our newsletter.



Cheri Bassana, Tammy Ward, Katrina Fisher and Viki Scherer



From left Sandi Braye, Nathan Dragovan, Alice Younker, James Elenbaas, Sam Tangman, Jeff McCollum

Dynagraphics, Inc. / Fast Impressions in Decatur, donates the printing of the newsletter. What a wonderful blessing they have been to RTJ. We appreciate each volunteer and the work they do. Together we are taking prisoners for Christ!

PLEASE CUT ALONG LINE AND MAIL TO RTJ

AREAS OF INTEREST:

- JAIL/PRISON OUTREACH
- ADD TO MAILING LIST
- OFFICE VOLUNTEER
- OTHER _____

LOVE OFFERING:

NAME _____
 ADDRESS _____
 CITY _____
 STATE & ZIP _____


PRAYER REQUESTS

You can also e-mail your prayer requests to tamibanchy@yahoo.com

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SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

2/14/10 Herrick Methodist and Towerhill Methodist

2/21/10 Pana Church of the Nazarene

2/28/10 Herrick Christian

3/7/10 Crismon Church of the Nazarene

Office: 217.728.8775
Mobile: 217.855.7799
e-mail: rtiprisonministry@yahoo.com
Web: www.releasethroughjesus.org

PRISON SERVICES

1st Sunday

Vandalia
Taylorville
Centralia NEW!

2nd Saturday

Big Muddy

2nd Sunday

Graham

Every Monday

Lawrence

4th Sunday

Decatur
Taylorville

Feb. 21

Lincoln CC

Friday Evenings

Big Muddy

PRISON BIBLE STUDIES

Monday

Decatur
Graham
Taylorville
Big Muddy

Tuesday

Big Muddy

Thursday

Centralia
Taylorville

Saturday

Decatur Work Release

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and women to know Jesus and lead them to salvation, to teach the men and women to hide the Word of God in their hearts so that they might sin no more, and to regularly visit churches of all Christian denominations to spread the good news of God's work with the incarcerated.