

Missionary Evangelism to Corrections

Sharing the gospel & Christ's love

with those in corrections since 1982

Light & Joy

December 31st 2015 Newsletter

Picture by Rolf Biemath from Lakes Free Christmas Celebration "Believe"



MEC Spotlight

Challenges and Praises of 2015

Listening to and reading testimonies is what we all want to hear. But everyone knows there are always challenges in ministry. Here are some of both for MEC in 2015.

Challenges

- * Security rules in jails are tightening up. It is only rare instances in a few jails that we can have special speakers or programs as we used to do on a regular basis.. This affects the numbers of people willing to volunteer as people cannot go in and observe programming before they make a decision about serving.
- * As people vacate volunteer positions it is necessary to find replacements right away and hopefully in time to get the new person cleared before the person moving on is done.
- * As jail staff changes, establishing relationships with new staff is crucial. Continuing communication with the current ones is necessary to keep things running smoothly.
- * Finding substitutes for those who occasionally miss their services is becoming more challenging, but it gives MEC volunteers a lot of credibility because then services do not have to be can-

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Your helping with cards keeps the door open to go in and speak with the youth. Along with some of how God has met me, this is the message that we were able to share with close to 100 youth on Christmas eve morning this year.

I have been thinking a lot about two words this Christmas - Light and Joy. When I asked the youth which they wanted me to talk about first they almost all responded right away with light.

John 1:4 says, "In Him was life, and that life was the light of men." John 12:46 "I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness. Some recognized that light and pursued it, entered into it, accepted it. Others did not recognize or receive it and blocked it."

There is a character in the Bible; Saul was his Jewish, Hebrew name and Paul his Roman name. He thought that people who were following Christ were deceived and would go after them to put them in prison and even kill them. When he was on his way to Damascus a bright light blinded him and a voice said, "Why do you persecute me?" He asked, "Who are you Lord?" And the voice answered "I am Jesus who you are persecuting." This shows us that the way we treat people is the way we treat Christ. Then Christ told him, "I am sending you ... to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a

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December Highlights

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Light & Joy cont. place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.” Acts 26:18

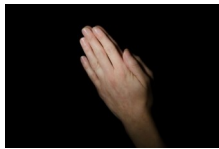
Don't we all want this turning from Satan, the world, & temptation to have the power to make the choices that we want to make, have the attitudes we want and need and to do things right. We all go through dark times and we need light to guide our way. Even in days that are not hard we need light to walk and live. Jesus is that light that will help us see the way to go.

Joy is a characteristic that was sorely lacking in my life until I began to learn who God is, and to receive Him and what He has done with gratefulness. When the angel came to announce Jesus' birth he said He should be named Immanuel which means God with Us. He came to live life as we have lived. He had all the temptation we have and more, so He fully understands every emotion and trial we go through, yet He did not sin, thus He qualified to pay the price for our sin with His life. Understanding this with forgiveness and power to change brings great joy.

But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid* For behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people, for all mankind." This joy comes overwhelmingly and suddenly to some and another part of it takes time to grow. In Galatians 5:22 it says the Fruit of the Spirit is love, joy peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, meekness and self-control. Aren't these qualities we all want in our lives?

These are two Christmas presents that I wish for you this Christmas and for all of your life. Light and Joy Merry Christmas !

- **A Few Inmate requests. altered for confidentiality**
- Please watch over them. Give them strength, togetherness & health. Give me strength to get through these 4 months in here.
- Help me find honesty and a new job when I get out and get back on track.
- Strength to be strong and be able to stay sober and resist temptation [these are probably not trivial ones] and do the right thing.
- My freedom - win my trial - I'm not guilty of - and to be with my family and friends and for their health. My strength to change, family



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for your help with Christmas Cards and Gifts



Because of your generous help in doing cards this year we were able to add the Anoka County Work release inmates to those who received them. Between those, Chisago County inmates and staff, the East Central Regional, Juvenile Center, Anoka County Secure and the Nonsecure facility (formerly the shelter) there were 450 cards with a personal note, a verse and a testimony that were (and a few still are being) distributed.

A special thank you to

Phil and Jane Keezer



for donating two boxes of children's toys. These went to Anoka County Stepping Stones Homeless residents were able to give gifts to their children.

Your Feedback can benefit inmates



We are doing the Christmas article, the spotlight and end of the year challenge and Prayer & Praises in this letter. Because of these we are not doing an article on Problem thinking and the Lord's Healing this month.

We are looking for feedback on this series. If you have not read the first three, have feedback or have any stories to contribute towards these articles please email them to us. The next one will be on pride. Lord Willing, when completed it will be reproduced and given out to inmates.

celed.

- * Libraries in the jail are accepting fewer donations. Along this line, although this does not affect the jails as much, Prison chaplains must review all materials personally and they get a backlog and therefore accepting donated DVD'S even with the license fees already paid happens less. Inmates and families call wanting to have access to more Christian materials.
- * Video and DVD time is decreased allowing for few Christian movies. We know that some who would not go to a service would come to a movie. Those which were accepted with the idea they were not overly religious but addressed topics such as addiction were turned down. Pray that those that were donated will not be sitting in closets but will be used.
- * As churches become larger and less community building oriented there is less support and accountability for volunteers that go into the jails. Ongoing communication is always necessary between the church, the volunteers and MEC
- * The prayer requests we receive from inmates are heart wrenching. You can read a representation of these on the next page. Our intercessors get 8 pages of these with the names every 10 days. This is only a portion of those being ministered to.

Praises!

- ! Relationships that have been established with program directors and chaplains over the years to continue in many places.
- ! Monthly Newsletters by e-mail
- ! Intercession Letter for has increased to every 10 days. Praise God for the intercessors who are praying for the prayer requests!!!!!!!!!!
- ! The following books were donated for the jails we serve in. :Bloom in the Dark, by Pam Wallace. 70 Life Recovery Bibles and workbooks published by Tyndale House –donated by Korean Presbyterian Church, (Forgot to keep track of numbers) Free On the Inside NKJV Bibles. Miscellaneous books for jail libraries, Donated several boxes of used Bibles to International Literature Distribution. CoonRapids Evangelical Free Church had a matching challenge which was met and these will be purchased soon.
- ! Grieved the Passing & Celebrated the lives of volunteers Genevieve Jacobson and Naomi Johnson from IBG as they joined Christ in Heaven
- ! National Comedian Bill Arnold shared the gospel with his Clean Comedy at the Spring event, Tim Walsh spoke on “How God Heals the Brain”at the fall event, and People of Hope lead in music and worship at both events
- ! Met with 20 inmates for 33 sessions of prerelease information and goals.120 some letters from inmates answered, and some family requests responded to.
- ! 79 Church Services, Bible Studies & Individual Spiritual Counseling or mentoring sessions each Week
- ! 10 Victory Over Addictions, Celebrate Recovery or Outreach Classes each Week
- ! 500 Daily Breads during the year, plus 200-300 Christmas Daily Breads distributed
- ! Oriented 18 new volunteers, 4 took further training

We are grateful that the ministry is still going and for new people who come forward!

Inmate Prayer Requests cont.

- togetherness, a home, love, family peace and the holidays.
 - For my sobriety, my family to have peace and come together.
- My children, my wife – for both her and my recovery from drug and alcohol addiction I have recommitted to the LORD
- Asked the LORD to save him from his violent life and was immediately arrested. He has recommitted to the LORD. Strength, to be able to communicate with his family, court case.
- To understand who GOD is – for his family, case.
- To meet that special someone to start a family (he's 37), court date and his writing endeavor
- T. passed away yesterday, pray for her children.
- Pray for H and N, that the bonds of addiction would be broken.
- Pray that I will have discipline and obedience in my life. That God will help me to stay true to His Word and also stay humble .Came to know Jesus as Lord.
- Pray that God forgive me for my sins, and make me focus on what is right, and show me the righteous way of life as a whole. Pray for my family and watch over them as they seek Life. Amen.
- Pray for my mother to be healthy, my baby's mother to be safe & loved, & for me to be able to see & love them again. Also for my kids to be happy.
- What I do not want is what I keep on doing. Please help me find the strength to be the man I want to be. (Please pray Romans 7 for Him and these)
- [His Children's names] I love you and I pray your mother will let us be together again. Love, your Daddy. (sic)
- C [gang]. {We pray for complete deliverance and forgiveness and complete change of allegiances from gang to the Lord Jesus Christ and love} Please pray to soften the hearts' of my enemies and forgive them. Amen. Please pray for my friends and family to have an abundance of blessings and a Merry Christmas. Amen. [my church] 93X have an abundance of blessings. Amen. Please pray that Jesus has a happy birthday. Amen. Bob has a Merry Christmas. Amen.
- [May this] drive her to Jesus, not drugs.

Ministry Friends

We know that we are not alone in Ministry.

This month's shout-out is to

Serenity Village

SV Housing www.serenityvillage.net

Among the best available when it comes to transitional housing. It is important to us that our residents call SV their home, and not just a place to lay their heads at night.

SV Community Church www.serenityvillagecc.org

Love, encouragement, fellowship and practical Biblical teachings to allow people who have never felt accepted or connected to a church to be themselves and experience peace, joy and spiritual growth while developing a relationship with God.

Acts 2:42-47 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

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