



# Release Through Jesus Prison Ministry

April 2009

## NEWS



For most of us, having a "good time" means we are doing something we enjoy. For inmates though a "good time" is time that is reduced off their sentence. According to the Dept. of Corrections website, there are four types of good time, but not all offenders can qualify for them.

**Statutory Good Time** refers to the percentage of time an inmate must spend incarcerated. The "truth in sentencing" laws require a convicted murderer to serve 100% of his sentence, violent criminals must serve 85% of their sentences.

**Meritorious Good Time** is 90 days, awarded at the discretion of the director and based on good behavior.

**Supplemental Meritorious Good Time** is a second 90 day award for non-violent offenders.

**Earned Good Conduct Credit** refers to time earned by an inmate for participation in education, drug treatment, or other programs offered. Inmates earn 1/2 day off their sentence for each day they participate in the program.

Dear Partners,

As you can tell by the information in the newsletter we are quite busy. We are being stretched in so many areas, but God is bringing in more laborers. We had a great response from the newspaper article about the halfway house. People have been calling, not only to help with the house but many want to help wherever they can. It is amazing how God is placing people in key positions or areas just to help others. This past Sunday I was at one of the churches that has helped us for many years and the pastor shared a story that I would like to share with you. I thought it was exactly where we, the church, are at today.

During the Civil War, a man on the battle front received a letter from home stating that his father had died. It was time to gather the crops in and his mother and sister could not do it alone so he decided to go see President Lincoln and ask to have a furlough to be able to go home to help his family and then return to the war. He began his long journey to the White House and after several days he finally reached the front gate. He told the guard that he wanted to see the President. The guard said that is not how it is done. You must make an appointment and wait several weeks or even months to see the President. Very down-hearted the soldier walked away and sat down on a bench in the park, very sad, not being able to help his family. A little boy came and sat on the bench beside him. For no reason at all the soldier began to tell the little boy his problem. The boy took him by the hand and said, "Come with me." He walked right past the guard, through all the gates and down the hallway. The soldier was amazed. They walked into the oval office where President Lincoln was having a meeting. The President stopped and looked at the boy and said, "Todd, who is your friend?" (Todd was the President's son.) That soldier could have missed out completely by simply saying, "He's only a kid; why tell him my problems?"

Sometimes Christians need help in an area but make assumptions about the people around them....people who could be God's answer to their prayers but on first observation may not "fit the bill". It is like we are given a gift but it is not wrapped in the package we think it should be. RTJ does not want to make this mistake. We need the help of all Christian denominations, young and old alike, new Christians and seasoned saints. Thank you for your help with this ministry. We could not do the work without you.

Brother Jim



## Centralia Correctional Center

There were 53 men in attendance at the chapel service at Centralia Correctional Center. There was a strong presence of the Lord and a spirit of worship and all were ministered to through the preaching and teaching of God's Word.

Jerry Van Houten

## Taylorville Correctional Center

The Taylorville service began with the joy and anticipation we've come to expect in the service. The praise and worship was right on track. The 80 men there were raising their hands and clapping as the Spirit moved. When we went into the message which was on tithing the men seemed to be drawing from every word that was spoken. The hunger in the room was something you could feel in the air.

When the invitation was given no one came forward. But when asked if there was anyone who needed prayer, the whole room began to move. The men brought many concerns which they laid at the altar of the Lord. After the service 8 men came up to tell me how they had been tithing until just before the first of the year. They then informed me how convicted they were by the Spirit of the Lord for their lack of faith. It is truly wonderful when God confirms the message in this fashion. May God receive the praise and glory. AMEN!!

Blessings in Christ

Steve Wright



## Vandalia Correctional Center

What a great service we had at Vandalia Sunday, March 1. The message was "Is it your beginning or the end?" when faced with the reality of hell, no one really wants to go there. At the first service of about 100 guys, 4 accepted Christ. At the second service of about 60, 8 accepted Christ. Wow!! Needless to say, I flew home at what my God did. Pray for the guys that they will stay true. We have a number at Vandalia, Taylorville, and Graham who will be going home soon. They will need our prayers more than ever then. GOD IS SO GOOD!

Rev. Lila Chaplin



## Halfway House effort proposed

**MATTOON** — A prison ministry is about more than Bible study in a prison cell.

A group of Christians involved with Release Through Jesus, a prison ministry effort, is seeking to establish a halfway house for women released from prison who have a faith-based commitment to improve their lives.

"We need people to understand that we're not pulling people from prison cells and putting them back on the street," said the Rev. Jim Helton, who works with the Release Through Jesus Prison Ministry, as he attended a gathering of volunteers Monday in the East Side Church of The Nazarene of Mattoon.

One of the most difficult transitions for people released from prison is meeting "old friends" who drag them back to the behavior that sent them to prison in the first place, the pastors said. The halfway house would offer a supervised atmosphere with a Christian-based environment, they added.

"We're going to let them learn how to be an asset to society, not a liability," said Helton.

**This article was in the Mattoon Journal Gazette. You may read the article in its entirety at <http://www.jg-tc.com/articles/2009/02/24/news/doc49a2e527b3a15734713003.txt>**

## SPOTLIGHT



Lovington residents Skip and Debbie Renfro have been married going on 33 years . He used to be on the road as a truck driver for 15 years but now works in Arthur in a garage door factory . They attend church in Sullivan, IL, at Solid Rock Chapel.

Skip teaches the Purpose Driven Life at Taylorville Correctional Center and has a wonderful testimony which he shares with the prisoners.

Debbie is secretary for Disciple Heritage Ministry which endorses and has assisted RTJ with church contacts.

Skip and Debbie are valuable members of the RTJ volunteer community.

# Cheers

Cheers to my friends from the United Kingdom. When greeting or parting I say such things as: “Good morning”, “Howdy”, “Have a good day (or night)”. My friends from the UK say “Cheers.” Their cheerful and upbeat greeting is so unique and refreshing. Many Americans only say “Cheers” when they tip a glass, if you know what I mean. So I say to you “Cheers.”

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines cheer as: “state of mind or heart: spirit . . . gaiety . . . something that gladdens the heart . . . a shout or encouragement . . . to give hope or courage: to comfort . . . to urge on especially by shouts.”

We live in troubled times when many are facing storms in their lives. Jesus tells us “Be of good cheer” (Matthew 14:27). After Jesus miraculously fed a multitude of people, he sent his disciples across the lake while he went up the mountain to pray. The disciples encountered a ferocious storm that threatened to sink their boat. In Matthew 14:22-36 we can discover how to have “cheers” when the storms of life threaten to sink us.

First – COMMUNION with your Heavenly Father will cheer you on. Jesus’ priority was prayer. Jesus still intercedes on our behalf. (Hebrews 7:25) Communion with God brings peace and joy. We are encouraged, “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help us in the time of need” (Hebrews 14:6). When people saw the boldness of Peter and John they took note “that they had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13). What about you?

Second – CONTRARY winds of adversity will come to everyone at sometime in their lives. Those who look to Jesus receive His cheer. (Hebrews 12:1-2)

Third – Jesus CAME to them. “In the fourth watch of the night, Jesus went to them, walking on the sea” (Matthew 14:25 NKJV). Friend, when you call on Jesus He will come in the middle of your night. Like David, the disciples were met with blessings of goodness. (Psalm 21:3)

Fourth – CHEERS! “Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid” (Matthew 14:27). Fear and unbelief destroy peace and cheer. When we realize that the Lord of the universe is with us, we can have cheer even though the storms may rage. “For He himself has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you’” (Hebrews 13:5).

Fifth – “COMMAND me to come to you on the water,’ Peter said” (Matthew 14:28). At the Lord’s command Peter got out of the boat and walked on the storm tossed waves. We have the commands and promises of God to sustain and cheer us. Read and meditate on them. Step out and walk in faith. We can have great knowledge of God’s precious promises because we have seen Him fulfill them to us faithfully over the years. Do you need cheer? Keep His commands. “If you know these things, happy are you if you do them” (John 13:17).

Sixth – “COME.” Jesus called to Peter. Jesus calls you to come and follow Him. Keep your eyes on Jesus alone and walk through the storms that surround you. Be of good cheer.

Seventh – CALM. Jesus calmed the wind and the waves. Even more so, Jesus will calm the wind and waves of your soul when you invite him into the little boat of your life. The Prince of Peace will enter your inner being.

Eighth – CHURCH. “They came and worshiped Him, saying, ‘Truly you are the Son of God’” (Matthew 14:33). There is cheer when you obey God and worship Him with the family of God – the body of Christ. They had church. The people rounded up everyone who was sick and afflicted and brought them to Jesus and “as many as touched the hem of His garment were made perfectly well” (Matthew 14:34-36). Bringing others in need to this wonderful Savior will bring you cheers.

Reach out and touch Jesus by faith today.



Cheers,  
Cliff Sanders

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AREAS OF INTEREST:

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PRAYER REQUESTS

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Prison Services	Prison Bible Studies	Upcoming Speaking Engagements:	
<b>1st Sunday</b> Vandalia Taylorville	<b>Monday</b> Decatur Taylorville	Living Stones - Litchfield Northside Christian Church - Vandalia	April 5 April 19
<b>2nd Saturday</b> Big Muddy	<b>Thursday</b> Centralia Taylorville	Grace Nazarene - Salem Pana Methodist Church	April 15 April 26
<b>2nd Sunday</b> Graham	<b>Saturday</b> Decatur Work Release Center	Pana Nazarene Church Jerseyville Nazarene Carlinsville Nazarene	May 3 May 17 May 21
<b>3rd Sunday</b> Decatur Taylorville	<b>Quarterly</b> Lincoln & Centralia	Benton Nazarene Mainsfield Community Calvary Baptist - Newman	June 7 June 14 June 28
<b>4th Sunday</b> Decatur Taylorville			

This Ministry dedicates its time and resources to reaching those incarcerated by lifting up JESUS through praise, bringing His healing to the wounded and brokenhearted, deliverance to those in bondage to Satan, and seeing that the men and women hide God's word in their hearts through Bible study.

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