



Our Generation

Vol. I Issue III

September/October 2004

Dearest Saints,

Jesus came to them and said, *"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*
Matthew 28:18-20

In the name of God our heavenly Father, and our Lord and Redeemer, Jesus Christ: we express thanks for our ability to transcend boundaries, both in word and in Spirit, to fellowship with you once again.

This issue of *Our Generation* is dedicated to the introduction of our initiative that we are calling "Christians for Prisoners and Prisoners for Christ" (CFP&PFC). Our launching point is to begin healing within the gaping wound of America's failed prison system. We hope to build up bond Christians into strong and well-equipped disciples. We seek to reach out to over 2 million prisoners who comprise the mission field throughout the United States.

We are responding to the Great Commission – Matthew 28:18-20 (see first paragraph). Just as we are to love the Lord God above all and to love our neighbor alike, we are commanded to witness to God's love by going out and making disciples and teaching them to obey.

We have faith that the Lord has a place for every believer in His ministry. Please join us in this ambitious "grassroots" undertaking by prisoners to revive and revolutionize the application of the Great Commission in epic proportions in our prisons.

Our prayer is that you will read the enclosed information closely and rally your family, friends, churches and service organizations into supporting CFP&PFC. Brothers and sisters behind bars in the "prison churches"-- pray for the "outside churches" because we believe help is definitely on the way. May you be blessed in the promises of God through His Spirit. Remember the work all of us have been called to do. May all of us find strength and peace in His grace as we respond to God's call.

Sincerely,
Troy Rienstra and John Shulick



CHRISTIANS FOR PRISONERS & PRISONERS FOR CHRIST (CFP&PFC)

Goals and a Plea

Our Generation newsletter is sponsoring the development of a new movement that we are calling Christians for Prisoners and Prisoners for Christ (CFP&PFC). Through this alliance we will make every effort to fulfill the Great Commission and unify the Body of Believers which is the church of Jesus Christ.

Initially we will unite bond (in-prison) Christians with the churches of free society (outside prison walls). This alliance of bond and free Christians throughout America will enable a coordinated effort to: integrate families of in-prison believers into Christian communities; develop in-prison missionary programs for the equipping of bond Christians to share the gospel of Jesus; and develop successful faith-based pre/post release programming alternatives.

The current prison population has exceeded 2 million prisoners. It is estimated that roughly 12 percent (165,000) identify with the Protestant Christian faith. The great majority of these have inadequate

knowledge or concern for practical adherence to the fundamental and essential Christian principles.

The long-tried prison outreach ministries, in our opinion, are falling short in helping the unsaved prisoner and the newborn Christian. The “detached relationship” with the individual and the population as a whole has rendered them ineffective in most cases.

The “corrections industry” views prisoners as commodities. In addition, much state-supported rehabilitative programming has been abandoned due to budget constraints.

“And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep for now is our salvation nearer than when we first believed.” Romans 13:11

A 2002 report published by the U.S. Justice Department's Bureau of Justice Statistics reveals: 1 in every 37 American adults were either imprisoned at the end of 2001 or had been incarcerated at one time; that annually over 600,000 prisoners will be released from state and federal prisons; and, an estimated 1 in every 15 of all persons born in 2001 within the United States will be confined in a state or federal prison within their lifetime (jail or alternative incarcerations not included in the survey).

Moral-centered teaching is not encouraged, few (if any) useful educational programs exist, and the Christian experience is discouraged and opposed by most prison administrations and the population majority. Christian sacraments, rites and practices such as communion, baptism, Bible study and prayer gatherings, that are so important to the Christian faith, are either unavailable or rarely offered. The Christian life for the prisoner is promoted as being a privilege instead of a God-given, constitutional right.

We find the devout Christian communities within America's prisons have an earnest and burning expectation of acknowledgment from their brothers and sisters in the international body of believers. The purpose and function of the church was exemplified through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Jerusalem at Pentecost that brought into its communion believers of many countries. We seek the active and animated participation of the Christian body throughout our country to help restore prisoners, families, and communities by emulating the true spirit that defined the early church.

Summary of CFP&PFC Mission

The CFP&PFC alliance's mission is:

- to network resources, services, and persons for the advancement of the gospel;
- to fulfill the social principles of the Christian church by integrating the prisoner into society.

Our short term goals will begin on a response basis. Each community will have different needs to be met and resources at their disposal. We will accumulate pertinent information and detail feasible transition strategies.

Immediate goals: (Networking)

- Bond church adoptions
- Development of "In-prison" missionary core
- Prisoner-to-prisoner discipleship mentoring
- National prisoner discipleship teaching
- Prisoner family outreach

Long term goals: (Socializing)

- Pre/Post release preparation and programming
- Youth mentoring and delinquency prevention
- Housing/employment project
- Social service structure

As we progress, additional programs will be implemented on a national scale, demonstrating the presence, force and ability of the church to significantly influence a spiritual and moral change within America's prisons and free society.



Immediate Goals

1. Bond Church Adoptions

"Keep on loving each other as brothers. Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by doing so some people have entertained angels without knowing it. Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering." Hebrews 13:1-3

We rely upon the local church's heart to remember the prisoner, those who have received Jesus Christ and have become children of God. This newly established relationship will greatly edify the body of Christ and immediately effect the spiritually depraved. The collective representatives of local churches will be brought together where an orientation session will be held to form local/state CFP/PFC chapters. Each chapter will establish the following operational teams to implement the CFP/PFC agenda:

- CFP/PFC Chapter Development Team: Establish further local and state CFP/PFC chapters to serve their areas.
- Special Projects Team: Coordinate and provide logistical support for missions and outreach teams.
- In-Prisons Missions Support Team: Manage discipleship curriculum through visiting ministries; oversee

prison missionaries; serve as an intermediary for bond Christians; establish working relationships with prison chaplains.

- Prisoner Family Outreach Team: Develop contemporary programs to draw prisoner families into the local churches: develop youth/adult programs and family resource centers.
- Prisoner Visitation/Correspondence Team: Develop and manage a visiting ministry to meet regularly with bond Christians for study and edifying fellowship; establish a correspondence ministry to open positive lines of communication

2. In-Prison Missionary Project

"How I want you to know, brother, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, as a result it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly." Philipians 1:12-13

"And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others." II Tim. 2:2

God has built up mature and able Christians within every American prison facility to serve as ambassadors of Christ. Our mission is to provide them with spiritual, logistical and material support, enabling them to serve as missionaries appointed to disciple the bond church and evangelize the prison population.

Bond Christians have been shaped specifically for the prison ministry. We have confidence in their ability to produce animated disciples who will return to society as irreplaceable assets rather than being primed for continuing in a life of crime.

To maintain the integrity of the appointment, a process will be employed to evaluate selected bond Christians' ability to implement and manage the fundamental principles of church building, discipleship training and outreach evangelism.

Affirmed missionaries will be required to:

- a. Lead one-on-one and group discipleship studies.
- b. Develop and implement outreach strategies in concert with the sending church designed to reach specific groups, people, and families of those within prisons.
- c. Identify the need and develop strategies for pre/post release preparation and services.

3. Teaching Principles

“Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go onto maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment. And God permitting, we will do so.”

Hebrews 6:1-3

The key component of the CFP/PFC movement is the advancement of fundamental Biblical teaching. The greatest impediment for the Christian is a lack of biblical knowledge and the application thereof.

It is important for the bond Christian to develop a comprehensive understanding of what it means to be a child of God. Many bond Christians have only a vague understanding of the basic principles which:

- define what it means to be a Christian;
- what it means to live the life of a disciple, and how the Great Commission applies to him or her.

We believe the core teaching of discipleship should be the focus of weekly prison-sanctioned worship services and accompanied with a daily curriculum for a designated period. The aim is to bring bond believers “in line” with the gospel teachings and into accountability to Jesus Christ. By no means do we promote a “generic

uniformity,” – on the contrary, we encourage the animated inspiration of the Holy Spirit to develop each individual and endow him/her with spiritual gifts for the fulfillment of certain and specific calling. Our concern is simply that the biblical teaching within the prisons are not being tailored to meet the needs of the bond Christian.

There are many professed Christians within the prisons who attend the weekly worship services out of a burning desire to learn. We long to accommodate them and establish the gospel and discipleship teaching as common denominators for bond Christians. Through the employment of simple strategies we will create the opportunity to have constant and direct access to the “unreachable people.”

4. Prisoner Family Outreach

“Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.”

James 1:27

The Prisoner Family Outreach Ministry has two objectives:

- 1) to enfold the bond Christian’s family into a local Christian community; and
- 2) for secular prisoner population to be able to observe the love of Christ being revealed through those who

are “in Him,” that they might know these things could only happen by the hand of God.

Various methods will be researched and employed through the established outreach teams to creatively lead those in the dark to the saving grace of our Lord.

Closing Challenge

In conclusion, we would like to convey the importance of the initial stages of the CFP/PFC initiative which we’ve presented to you. We know that your lives will be enhanced and you will be blessed in joining us to bring Jesus to the prisoner. Please complete and return the registration form on page 10 at your earliest convenience - because “our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed.”

Prayer

We ask that you begin to include in your daily prayer regiment the following requests and develop them as a desire of your heart:

The unification of the Body of Believers, from community to global scale.

The breaking of barriers between the bond and free believers.

That the will and purpose of God for this generation be revealed and pursued as never before.

From Our Readers

Thanks to Rev. Ty Hofman from Grand Rapids for submitting this interesting and thought-provoking 'RECALL NOTICE' - author unknown

The Maker of all human beings is recalling all units manufactured, regardless of make or year, due to a serious defect in the primary and central component of the heart. This is due to a malfunction in the original prototype units code named Adam and Eve, resulting in the reproduction of the same defect in all subsequent units. This defect has been technically termed, "Subsequential Internal Non-morality", or more commonly known as S.I.N., as it is primarily expressed.

Some other symptoms:

1. Loss of direction
2. Foul vocal emissions
3. Amnesia of origin
4. Lack of peace and joy
5. Selfish, or violent behavior
6. Depression or confusion in the mental component
7. Fearfulness
8. Idolatry
9. Rebellion

The Manufacturer, who is neither liable nor at fault for this defect, is providing factory authorized repair and service free of charge to correct this SIN defect. The Repair Technician, Jesus, has most generously offered to bear the entire burden of the staggering cost of these repairs. There is no additional fee required. The number to call for repair in all areas is: P-R-A-Y-E-R. Once connected, please upload your burden of SIN through the REPENTANCE procedure.

Next, download ATONEMENT from the Repair Technician, Jesus, into the heart component.

No matter how big or small the SIN defect is, Jesus will replace it with:

1. Love
2. Joy
3. Peace
4. Patience
5. Kindness
6. Goodness
7. Faithfulness
8. Gentleness
9. Self control

Please see the operating manual, the B.I.B.L.E. (Believers Instructions Before Leaving Earth), for further details on the use of these fixes. As an added upgrade, the Manufacturer has made available to all repaired units a facility enabling direct monitoring and assistance from a resident Maintenance Technician, the Holy Ghost.

Repaired units need only make Him welcome and He will take up permanent residence on the premise!

WARNING: Continuing to operate the human being unit without correction voids any manufacturer warranties, exposing the unit to dangers and problems too numerous to list and will result in the human unit being permanently impounded. For free emergency service, call on JESUS.

DANGER: The human being units not responding to this recall action will have to be scrapped in the furnace. The SIN defect will not be permitted to enter Heaven so as to prevent contamination of that facility. Thank you for your attention. Please assist where possible by notifying others of this important recall notice!

EVANGELISM ON THE EDGE

Christians for Prisoners & Prisoners for Christ is a national grassroots movement towards the fulfillment of The Great Commission. Of 2.1 million prisoners incarcerated within the U.S., only an estimated 160 thousand of them are professed Christians. Many of these men and women who have received Jesus Christ are Spirit-filled and inspired to begin living out the Great Commission right where they are.

Therefore, it is essential for the churches (prison, local, and national) to unify for the advancement of the gospel! Through the local churches animated and active participation with prisoner/prisoner discipleship, Jesus Christ will greatly reduce prisoner recidivism and create devoted Christians who will serve the Lord powerfully in this generation.

What are the immediate goals for this alliance?

- To have in-prison churches be “adopted” by the local churches
- For Christian prisoners to be tutored in discipleship
- For prepared Christian prisoners to be ordained into the missionary ministry for (24/7) service to their communities as ambassador/mediators to their parent (sponsoring) church.

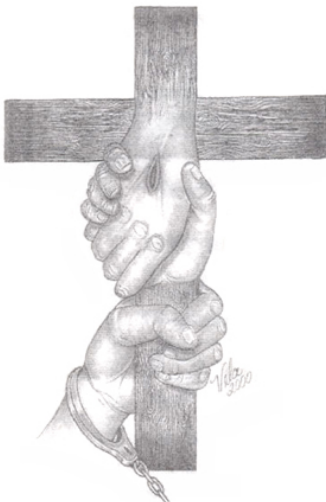
What are the immediate needs?

- Prayer warriors, lift up the unification of the Body of Christ
- Churches, individuals, and organizations, commit to the adoption (or co-adoption) of in-prison churches
- Interested volunteers and skilled teachers will be needed to mentor prisoners
- Seasoned ministers and gifted leaders are needed at local and state levels to implement and manage the CFP/PFC agenda

POINT TO PONDER

There was a time when the church was very powerful. It was during that period when the early Christians rejoiced when they were deemed worthy to suffer for what they believed. In those days the church was not merely a thermometer that recorded the ideas and principles of popular opinion; it was a thermostat that transformed the mores of society.

Wherever the early Christian entered a town the power structure got disturbed and immediately sought to convict them for being "disturbers of the peace" and "outside agitators." But they went on with the conviction that they were a "colony of heaven," and had to obey God rather than man. They were small in number but big in commitments. They were too God-intoxicated to be "astronomically intimidated." They brought an end to such ancient evils as infanticide and gladiatorial contest.



Things are different now. The contemporary church is often a weak, ineffectual voice with an uncertain sound. It is so often the arch-supporter of the status quo. Far from being disturbed by the presence of the church, the power structure of the church's community gives silent and often vocal sanction of things as they are.

But the judgment of God is upon the church as never before. If the church of today does not recapture the sacrificial spirit of the early church, it will lose its authentic ring, forfeit the loyalty of millions, and be dismissed as an irrelevant social club with no meaning for the twentieth century. I am meeting young people every day whose disappointment with the church has risen to outright disgust.

Maybe again, I have been too optimistic. Is organized religion too inextricably bound to the status quo to save our nation and the world?

Dr. Martin Luther King (Letter from a Birmingham Jail, April 1963).

PRISONER ARTWORK MISSIONARY SETS
LIVING CROSS PRISON MINISTRIES
PO BOX 1313
PERALTA, NM 87042-1313

REACHING THE GOAL

Our Generation is aiming high, and our journey is gaining ground for the kingdom of God. We thank all of you who have joined us by sharing *Our Generation* with others.

The success of *Our Generation* relies greatly upon the believers passion for sharing the gospel of Jesus with the world. We have hope that you will participate in one of the following ways:

Churches: Commit to making multiple copies of this newsletter and providing them to a sister church.

Small Groups: Commit to making copies for the local prisons, jails, mission outreach programs, and military troops.

Individuals: Pass this publication on to a friend. In doing so you will have shared the message we are trying to communicate with the world about what God is doing in and through *Our Generation*.

If you have any questions or would like to join with the Rienstra and Shulick families in the production and distribution efforts, please contact *Our Generation*

Bible Correspondence Courses

Mount Hope, Inc.
PO Box 1511
Hagerstown, MD 21741-1511

New Life & Health Ministries
405 Hunter Rd.
Godendale, WA 98620

Pan American Literature Mission
5215 E. Ft. Lowell Rd.
Tucson, AZ 85712



Post Prison Ministry *(write for information packets)*

Overcomers Outreach
520 N. Brookhurst St. #121
Anaheim, CA 92801

Mission Gate Prison Ministry
Box 6644
Chesterfield, MO 63006

Prison Fellowship
Box 25128
Colorado Springs, CO 80936

Tamek Ministries
1385 N. Maple #2039
Fresno, CA 93703

Teen Challenge
Box 1015
Springfield, MO 65801

(Please complete and return)

Christians for Prisoners & Prisoners for Christ

YES! I/WE WOULD LIKE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE UNIFICATION OF THE BODY, BY:

- Adopting (or co-adopting) a local prison church
- Serving as a mentor to Christians in prison via (visitation or correspondence)
- Participating in local or state leadership and organization
- Hosting CFP/PFC alliance training events for free ministry workers
- (Prisoner) serving as an (in-prison) church representative/missionary
- (Prisoner) participating in the discipleship training program.
- Other: _____

I WILL PARTICIPATE AS:

- Individual Church Organization

We prefer that you utilize your church/organization initially as an intermediary.

Name _____

Church or Organization _____

Prisoner No. _____ Facility _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____ E-mail _____

List ministry/programs experience: _____

Return by mail to:

Our Generation
1922 Camille Dr. SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49546

E-mail to:

rienstraog@hotmail.com

Phone:

(616) 635-7938 or (616) 464-6065

Our Generation

This newsletter is published to bridge the communication gap between believers in prison and those in free society. The goal is to find out where God is at work in *Our Generation* and to promote mutually beneficial relationships between ‘bond’ and ‘free’ churches.

We want to offer a platform to raise issues of concern, matters of interest, and offer an opportunity for all to display your talents and abilities. You are invited to contribute your voice to our network.

We welcome submissions regarding matters of justice in reference to prison conditions; resources for those incarcerated and/or recently released; articles on faith practices, struggles, and experiences; drawings and poetry; questions that you would like our readers to ponder and try to answer; reports from mission fields; and prayer concerns.

All submissions will become the property of the editors of *Our Generation* who will use discretion in their publication. Please send your inquiries or materials to:

Troy Rienstra 202107
Standish Maximum Facility
4713 W. M-61
Standish, MI 48658

John Shulick 447749
Standish Maximum Facility
4713 W. M-61
Standish, MI 48658

You may also e-mail (copies of e-mails will be sent by mail to us since we do not have access to the internet in the Michigan prison system) or send mail to *Our Generation* c/o Rich and Carol Rienstra, 1922 Camille Dr., SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49546.

If you are taking the challenge to join us, please let us know about your church or group. We would like to know how you are sharing this publication – *Our Generation* – with others. Please make copies and distribute freely to spread the network of “Christians for Prisoners and Prisoners for Christ.” We – Troy and John and our families – thank God in advance for anything you do to help us obey the call of Jesus Christ to ‘make disciples of all nations.’