

The ministry of CFP-PFC is based on Christ's commission to 'go and make disciples of all nations...teaching them to obey.' Matt. 28:19-20



Dear Friends,

Greetings in the precious name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I'm so thankful for the many letters of interest which we have received from people who read the spring '06 issue of *Our Generation*. Your continued support and participation is greatly appreciated.

Those of us who are in prison are encouraged to know that we are not enduring alone through our time in the wilderness. Quite often the prison life can be overwhelming, but the prayers of the saints enable us to persevere.

The past few months have been adventurous for me. On June 2, 2006, I joined with a small group of prisoners to plant our first House of Praise Evangelical (HOPE) church at Standish Prison. Our mission is much like that of Nehemiah when he discovered the walls of Jerusalem had been broken down, and those who inhabited the city were in great trouble and disgrace.

For too long the prison church has been in trouble and disgrace because the very elements purposed by the Lord to strengthen and secure the integrity of the body of Christ have been missing. The sacraments of communion and baptism are rarely observed, church discipline is non-existent and pure preaching of the word of God has been severely compromised. The gifts of God, Christ and the Holy Spirit are not taught about, and in some cases it is against prison policy to formally employ certain gifts of church leadership. HOPE church is a place where the institutes of God are being returned, taught and practiced.

If you or anyone you know is involved in prison ministry, or if you are a Christian within the prison and would like to take part in bringing reform to the church behind bars, I invite you to join us in the HOPE church planting mission throughout our nation's prison system. For more information, please contact Christians for Prisoners.

This issue of OG includes a sampling of artwork and writings we've received from fellow prisoners. Thanks you for sharing your thoughts, stories, and gifts. All praise, glory and honor be to God for his faithfulness in enabling us to spread the word about how the Holy Spirit is transforming the prisons by moving the hearts of many prisoners.

Your continued prayers for our success in sowing cultivating and harvesting within the prisons have profited much; however, there is much still to do. Please continue with us in our efforts as we desire to win the least of these for Christ. And send us your thoughts, questions and testimonies. I look forward to hearing from you, and receiving your artwork and writings.



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4713 W. M-61  
Standish, MI 48658

*Our Generation* newsletter's purpose: To encourage the spiritual growth of followers of Jesus Christ who are incarcerated, and to bridge the communication gap between believers in prison and those in free society



Exhausted from months of work, Randy Haynes 224-393 poses with the mural he just completed of the Motor City skyline at Standish Maximum Correctional Facility, 4713 W. M-61, Standish, MI 48658



To learn about basic, clear resources to help people with addictions, fears and other life challenges, go to and check out [www.basicsoflife.org](http://www.basicsoflife.org)  
Rev. Tom Kaastra is the founder and director.

# Our Generation

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Christians for Prisoners-Prisoners for Christ  
c/o Church of the Servant CRC  
3835 Burton Street SE,  
Grand Rapids MI 49546



Matt Matteo, a prisoner in Pennsylvania, sent us several drawings, some of which we will save for future issues of *Our Generation*. His work can be found in the books *Chicken Soup for the Prisoner's Soul* and *Serving Time, Serving Others* by Tom Lagana. He says the ones he sent us are his first 'Christian-themed' and in-color cartoons. Thanks, Matt, for sharing the cartoons, and for sending this letter from a man on death row:

*"I live for my letters with news from my friends. They have become my extended family. They are the root system that keeps me anchored and in touch with reality - certainly a reason for living when little else remains. Although hatred and pain will always exist, I have found there is an antidote, that being the caring and love that arrives in the form of letters that float through these prison walls like magic, carrying a drug stronger than the poison of hate. You who write to me have given me hope and strength; you have taught me the meaning of true friendship and humanity. It is not the length of life that matters, but rather the richness and quality of life. Thanks to you, my friends, I know that I have worth and value as a human being."*

## Plea for Church Authority by James Doyle

As a 21-year veteran of the Florida Department of Corrections (FDOC) I have often struggled with my views of the FDOC chaplains. I desire to submit to God-given church authority (Romans 13:1-7; I Thessalonians 5:12-13), however, I wonder if FDOC chaplains represent God's true church?

The three marks of the true church are 1) the pure preaching of the gospel; 2) the pure administration of the sacraments; and 3) church discipline. (The Belgic Confession, Article 29). Church discipline is prohibited in the FDOC because chaplains are not allowed to "discriminate" or exclude anyone from participation based on beliefs of lifestyle. Pure preaching is absent - a true sermon is an exposition of Scripture, or 'doctrine.' FDOC chaplains see doctrine as divisive or controversial. Pure administration of the sacraments cannot exist without pure preaching. Who can understand the significance of the church's signs and seals without a preacher who will teach about them?

FDOC chaplains are agents of the state administering a state-run religious program to prisoners. As such, they are answerable only to the FDOC. They do not have a Scripturally-based accountability structure. There is neither an elders' board nor a denominational presbytery to check their conduct or doctrine. This lack of a godly accountability structure often leads to abuse.

Over the years, FDOC chaplains have lied to me, insulted me, racially and religiously discriminated against me, and in general dehumanized me. Other prisoners have faced worse abuses than I have. FDOC chaplains do not have good reputations among prisoners. Often Christian prisoners do not support FDOC chaplains or attend their services.

There are good, God-fearing chaplains working within the FDOC. Sadly, I have not encountered one for many years. There is a need for pure preaching, pure administration of the sacraments and church discipline in the prison church. Most of all, there is a need for church authority. For those of us housed by FDOC, this church authority needs to operate through the FDOC chaplaincy. Prison ministries - volunteers from the local church - are the real representatives of God's church in prison. I urge Florida's Reformed, Christian churches to adopt prisons. Organize teams that will enter the prisons; provide prisoners with solid teaching and accountability; send us back into our mission field to share the gospel more powerfully and more effectively than ever. Help us remove the reproach that has been brought upon Christ's name, and help grow God's church in Florida's prisons.

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## Update on PfC-CfP Activities

Over the past few months CFP has been busy calling attention to the plight of the prisoner and strengthening the bond between free and prison churches.

1) The task force facilitated an educational event at Church of the Servant on Sunday, June 25, with Pastor Steve Moerman telling about the Crossroad prison church in South Dakota and how the CRC denomination helps.

2) A delegation of four pastors, including Pastor Moerman, visited with COS missionary Troy Rienstra to assess the state of the church at Standish Prison. On Saturday, July 8, an article in the *Grand Rapids Press* highlighted the desire of several Christian Reformed leaders to establish a church in a prison in Michigan. Watch for regular reports about this in future OG newsletters.

3) The CFP task force encourages letter-writing to prisoners by making up envelopes and giving guidelines and ideas to church members. In addition, the group raises funds to purchase discipleship materials and Bibles for prisoners who desire to strengthen their walk with the Lord.

Some members of the Christians for Prisoners (CFP) task force: (standing L-R) Marilyn Leisman, AnnaMae Bush, Ken Andre, Carolyn Geertsma, Louis Tamminga, (seated L-R) Naji Umran and Carol Rienstra



4) In partnership with the organization INNOCENT!, CFP brought an award-winning documentary film "After Innocence" to COS on Friday, July 28. For information about this film, check out [www.afterinnocence.com](http://www.afterinnocence.com) or about the organization, go to [www.aboutinnocent.org](http://www.aboutinnocent.org)



A crowd of more than 80 people talked with Doug Tjapkes, director of INNOCENT!, at Church of the Servant on July 28 after watching "After Innocence," a film about the struggles of 7 exonerated men who were proven innocent through DNA testing but still treated as though they were guilty.

## Beyond Prisons: A New Interfaith Paradigm For Our Failed Prison System

by L. Magnani and H. L. Wray

A strong indictment of the current prison system, undertaken by two respected experts on behalf of the American Friends Service Committee, traces the history and features of our penal system, offers strong ethical and moral assessments of it, and lays out a whole new paradigm of criminal justice based on restorative justice and reconciliation. The book puts forward a 12-point plan for immediate changes.



*Beyond Prisons* opens a long-needed national dialogue on our responsibilities as citizens and as a nation to provide remediation rather than mere retributive incarceration, answerable to the common good and the justice of God.

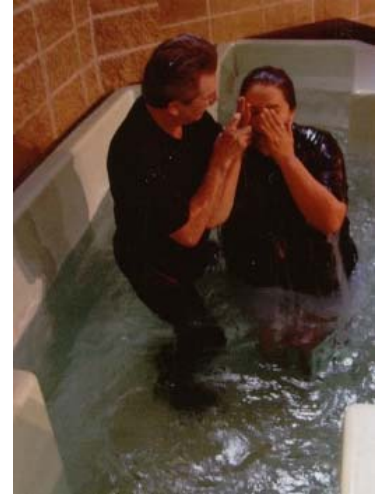
**Confronting Confinement: A Report of The Commission on Safety and Abuse in America's Prisons** reflects a thorough review of available research and data about US prisons and covers four areas: dangerous conditions of confinement (violence, poor health care, and inappropriate segregation) that can also endanger corrections officers and the public; the challenges facing labor and management; weak oversight of correctional facilities; and serious flaws in the available data about violence and abuse. For the complete report, which came out in June 2006, and has spurred much discussion about a new day dawning in the world of criminal justice as "society slowly turns toward the light," go to the website: <http://www.prisoncommission.org/report.asp>

## Lisa's "Life" Story

Lisa writes of her baptism which took place on June 11, 2006: "When Pastor Rogers asked me if I had anything to say, I said, "YES! Out with the old, in with the new! My Lord and Savior washed all my sins away."



(Lisa's daughter and Lisa)



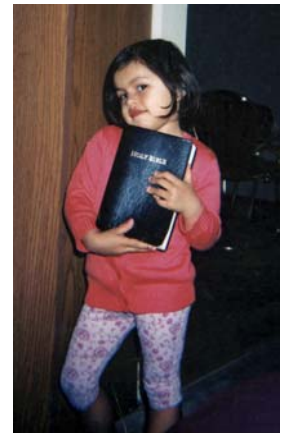
In September 2005, Lisa sent me a letter in response to seeing the familiar face of a childhood friend on the cover of a magazine. (My picture with the title of the article "Plea from the Church Behind Bars" was featured in the September Banner, monthly magazine of the Christian Reformed Church.) Since then Lisa and I have been corresponding and growing together in the grace of the Lord.

On January 1, 2006, Lisa attended a New Year's Day worship service at a Church of God fellowship. She was led by the Spirit of God to respond to an altar call. Calling upon the Lord to come in and fill her life, Lisa prayed the sinner's prayer out of a broken and contrite heart.

Since then, through much adversity, Lisa has continued to grow in faith. The devil has made many attempts to shake her trust in God, but she continues to make it plain to me that her trust, hope and faith are in Jesus Christ, the one who is able to save her from her old life. Lisa has become an inspiration and example to me of what faith in the midst of a storm looks like. Please pray for Lisa and her family, that her whole house be saved, that she is daily strengthened in the faith, and that she be gainfully employed. TR

"He (Jesus) said to them, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.' And He took the children in His arms, put His hands on them and blessed them." Mark 10:14b-16.

A prisoner equipped this child with the word of God. Soon she will be using the same Word to set captives free. (Thank you, Deon, for this precious picture. TR)



PRAYER JOYS AND CONCERNS  
Please pray for and about the following:

- The new Angel Tree mentoring program being developed by Prison Fellowship of Michigan (PFM), VIP Mentoring, KidsHope USA, Mel Trotter Ministries, and Gospel Communications that will help prisoners' children.
- PFM recently hired a Calvin College graduate to serve in the area of college initiatives to raise up a new generation of mentors.
- Prison administrators and officers who are open to the gospel and serve as godly examples and influencers to prisoners and one another.
- Proven prisoner reformation programs, such as Innerchange Freedom Initiative in Newton, Iowa, to prosper to the Glory of God.
- Brother-in-Christ Clyde Davis will soon be looking for a church family that will encourage, discipline and love him – on the outside!



This is a work in progress that I'm painting at Standish. The finished product will be posted in the next issue of Our Generation. TR

COMING SOON! Prison Congregations of America is hosting a "Come and See" gathering in Sioux Falls, SD on October 26 & 27, 2006. Check it out at [www.prisoncongregations.org](http://www.prisoncongregations.org) The Sept. 21 Calvin College Noontime Series program features parents of a prisoner speaking about "Serving Life Sentences." Call 526-6175 for more information. To become involved with the ministry of Christians for Prisoners -Prisoners for Christ (CfP-PfC) contact Pastor Naji Umran at Church of the Servant or e-mail [rienstraog@hotmail.com](mailto:rienstraog@hotmail.com)