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LUTHERAN
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COMPASSION

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Let Go and Let God!

by Deaconess Sarah Owens

Melissa* always had a wide smile, but her face revealed age beyond her years. She had experienced addiction to drugs, the loss of children and now incarceration. Her tough living had finally caught up with her and she was in prison for the first time.

I had met her earlier in the county jail and now served her in prison. Finally, the day came when Melissa excitedly told me about her, "out date." She would finally be going home.

However, it didn't take very long and she was back in county jail. Melissa was well schooled in the philosophies of addiction and the facts of the Twelve Step Program, but couldn't put them into practice. She spoke of frustration with herself and her choices. She was discouraged even though she knew that God had a plan for her.

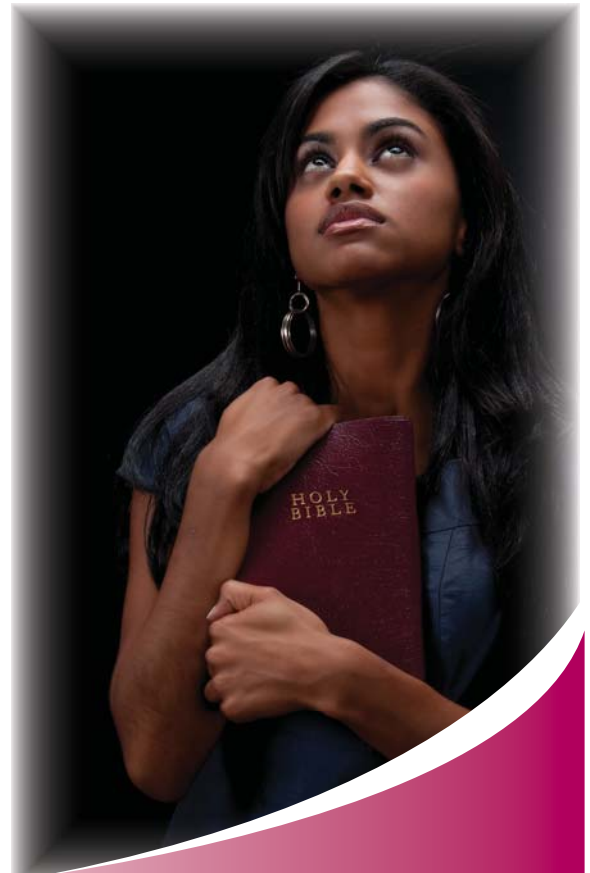
As we talked about God, Melissa had an important question for me. She asked, "How do I know if I've let go?" I knew what she meant because the Twelve Steps talk about surrendering your life to God. Melissa wondered whether she was merely fooling herself or whether she truly, "let go." Was she really ready to put God in charge of her life?

I talked about Psalm 23, v. 3, "He makes me lie down in green pastures." I explained to Melissa that we can't make ourselves, "let go." Trusting in our own thoughts and emotions will only tie us

up in knots, make us fearful and give us reason to question. However, David says that the Good Shepherd can make us "lie down" in His care. It takes a lot for sheep to feel that they are safe enough to lie down. The Good Shepherd can provide such an environment.

Melissa needed to believe that she should not worry so much about letting herself go, but instead needed to simply rest in the perfect, consistent care and love of the Good Shepherd.

CONTINUED ON PG 2





A Young Inmate's Story

by Inmate Bruce (not his real name) and Chaplain Charles Iles Sr.

THRIVENT CHOICE – for members of Thrivent Financial for Lutherans: Voting on the ballot provided by Thrivent for donations to a charity or charities of your choice has begun. WLIM is registered as “Wisconsin Lutheran Institutional Ministries.” Please consider donating some or your entire Thrivent Choice gift for 2010 to WLIM. Thank you!

“LET GO AND LET GOD” —
CONTINUED FROM PG 1

If Melissa changes her focus from herself to her Savior, she will then find the forgiveness, confidence and strength she needs to continue the difficult journey. What an awesome gift God gives us. We don't need to focus on ourselves. Rather, focus on the changeless love, perfect forgiveness and constant care of an awesome, loving God!

Melissa is now in her treatment program. May she keep her eyes on Jesus, the only true source of confidence. May she finally know the solution to her hard living by letting go and letting God!

**Not her real name*

I attended a WELS grade school and a WELS area Lutheran high school. In college, I began smoking pot and drinking. After college I got a good job. I worked hard and partied hard too. Life was good, or so I thought.

On the day of the accident, I had been fishing and drinking all day and into the evening. I was offered a ride home by one of my friends, but I thought I would be fine. Then the unimaginable, unthinkable happened. On my way home I blacked out and my truck hit a car head-on.

I was injured slightly in the accident. But I was devastated when I heard that the two people who were in the other car were killed. And it was all my fault! I was an emotional wreck.

After being checked out at the hospital, I was placed under arrest for OWI and was immediately jailed. I had never been in serious trouble before and now I was facing two counts of vehicular homicide. The hurt and pain which I inflicted on others was almost unbearable. I even considered suicide.

My pastor came to visit in jail. He reminded me of my Savior's love. I returned to the Bible and read until I found comfort.

In court, I pleaded guilty. I was sentenced to fourteen years in prison plus sixteen additional years of extended supervision.

I often wonder why I didn't die in the accident. The effects of the accident are like ripples on water. The family who lost a husband/father and a son/brother are severely hurt. My family and even the entire community have been affected by my poor decisions. Why did I start drinking? Why didn't I let someone drive me home? Why wasn't I killed?

I now know that God has a plan for me. Because of Jesus, he has forgiven me. My family and friends have been incredible – their support has kept me going. Chaplain Iles' Bible study and visits have been a blessing. And each month I receive the Lord's Supper for the forgiveness of all my sins.

It is so easy to be caught up in “earthly” things. Like me, so many get involved with drugs and alcohol. Think about the devastation that can result. I am writing to urge you, don't get started! I don't want anyone to experience what happened to me. Avoid drugs or alcohol.





The Class of 2010

by Chaplain Joseph Radsek

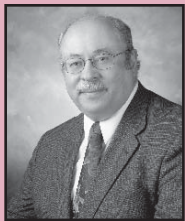
It was not a typical confirmation and first communion. There were no fresh-cut flowers on the altar, no pews packed with proud parents and other relatives, no beautiful music and congregational singing. In fact, there were none of the typical trappings that accompany those two momentous occasions in the life of a Christian. This confirmation service was one I will not forget. Three men gathered around a tiny table in a small cinderblock room for their confirmations. They had gathered in the same room for Bible study many times.

Every confirmation class is made up of students with various backgrounds and this gathering of confirmands was no different. One was a college graduate and former business owner, whose knowledge of Scripture was already considerable when we first met. He kept me on my toes with his questions. Another of my confirmands began his studies with very little Bible knowledge at all. His parents divorced and stopped attending church a short time before he was to begin catechism instruction, and he never got the chance to attend any classes. Interestingly enough, my third confirmand had attended a WELS congregation for a time. In fact, it was through a contact I made while preaching at this church, that I first learned about him and discovered that he was an inmate at one of the facilities I visited. This was my confirmation class in the spring of 2010.

A confirmation class in a correctional institution is typically handled “one on one” for various reasons, but the

Lord opened this rather unique door for me. These three men had been coming regularly to my Bible classes for over a year and often stayed after class to ask questions. I invited them to go through an adult instruction class with me and they were all eager to do so. We studied the Scriptures together for several months and it was truly a joy to watch them grow in their faith and knowledge of God’s Word. A few weeks after Easter, they were confirmed and celebrated the Lord’s Supper together — brothers in the Lord.

Jesus said, “I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd” (John 10:16). Today, it continues to be my privilege and pleasure to have these men, these “brothers” in my prison Bible class every week. God be praised!



“Salvation, oh salvation! The joyful song proclaim” CW #571 v. 3

by Chaplain Kenneth Wenzel

From the African country of Ethiopia, a believer came to worship the Lord in Jerusalem. On his way home, the Holy Spirit sent Philip to explain to him that Jesus fulfilled God’s prophecies in the Book of Isaiah. In faith, the Ethiopian eunuch asked to be baptized and returned home rejoicing in his Savior.

I was called to visit an African man whose son was very ill. He was from the country of Congo in Africa, spoke only Swahili, and lived out of state. I phoned an interpreter so I could communicate with him. He told me that he was just beginning to read his Bible. His son had been baptized in a Lutheran church, but he himself did not yet understand the blessings of baptism. He asked for prayers since his son was so very sick. We prayed for God’s miraculous help.

CONTINUED ON PG 4



Mentors Make a Difference

by Chaplain Dan Krause

In a recent prison Bible Study, discussion turned to a former inmate. He was doing well six months after his release. Terry (not his real name) had a church home. He was continuing to follow the example of Mary (Luke 10:42) and devote himself to the “one thing that is needed.” Terry was confirmed in prison and upon his release was referred to a WLIM mentor.

Mentors can serve an important function – helping ex-offenders keep a spiritual focus. A WLIM mentor, Rebecca*, visits weekly with a woman who came to a Bible study while she was in prison. Now that she is out, she needs God’s Word. Rebecca and her mentee meet for a Bible study and discussion taken from the Living Water series of studies. “I used to think you had to be an Apostle Paul and have his experiences to make a difference in someone’s life, now I know it can be done through me,” Rebecca remarked. The local congregation and local pastor have also been part of a support system to provide for the spiritual, emotional and physical needs of a newly released ex-offender. They all help her to live in true freedom in Jesus.

While at a recent visit to the county jail, I served two of my former mentees. I was disappointed to see them back in jail, but I was again reminded of the importance of having a mentor serving a newly released prisoner. Those who have a caring, Christian friend are less likely to re-offend. (Statistically, about 70% of ex-offenders are back in prison within three years.)

If you are interested in being a mentor, a Christian friend of an ex-offender, please contact the WLIM office about more information and training. A new training manual for mentors has been prepared and training sessions will soon be scheduled in several locations.

Mentoring is very special and greatly needed ministry. Would you be interested in learning more?

**Not her real name*



MENTORING OF NEWLY RELEASED EX-OFFENDERS

A new training manual has been printed and grant funding is available for training sessions for those who might wish to serve their Lord by mentoring an ex-offender. Would you be interested? Please advise the WLIM office. You will be contacted when a training session is being held near your home.

“SALVATION, OH SALVATION! THE JOYFUL SONG PROCLAIM” —CONTINUED FROM PG 3

We spoke about baptism. Jesus’ promise that forgiveness, spiritual life, and friendship with God come through holy baptism gave him comfort and strength. Daily visits followed and I was able to read some Psalms. He listened and rejoiced in the Savior. He gave thanks to Jesus for forgiveness of sins and saving friendship. He began to understand God-given faith. He realized that he could boldly approach God’s throne of mercy for blessings upon his son’s doctors, nurses, medicines and treatments.

After several weeks, the African man went home rejoicing in his faith and with a healthier son. I was surprised at how much I was able to share through an interpreter. I rejoiced in the Holy Spirit’s power. Through the Word of God, faith is strengthened. Like Philip in the Book of Acts, I watched a man from Africa go home rejoicing in the Savior’s love, care and forgiveness.



The “Wrong Kind” of Worshippers

by Chaplain Phil Merten

Worship services at the Racine Correctional Institution (RCI) on Saturday evenings usually include a worship team from one of WLIM’s supporting congregations. The team members often are feeling some uneasiness when they first arrive at RCI, but by the end of the first service, the initial misgivings have been replaced by the joy and excitement of worshipping with a group of brothers in Christ. The team members never knew they had these Christian brothers.

During one of these Saturday evenings, a member of the church worship team told me that he hadn’t expected to enjoy the company of a bunch of prison inmates, but he was. “But,” he added, “It’s not like these guys are murderers and rapists or anything like that.”

I said, “Yes they are.”

His eyes bugged out a little. I continued, “There are killers and rapists and drug lords and child molesters here in the congregation tonight. That’s who you’re worshipping with.”

He thought about it for a second and then grinned. “I guess if God can welcome me, there’s no reason he can’t welcome these guys either, and no reason I can’t welcome their company.”

**“He was
counted
among those
who had
committed
crimes”**

Luke 22:37

He had been operating under the common misconception that there are criminals, and then there are criminals; and of course, only the “right kind” of criminals were going to attend a Christian worship service. The truth is, though, that even though we draw a line between the “right kind” of people and the “wrong kind” of people, Jesus is going to seek out and connect with all kinds of people. The people that some might consider “the wrong kind” are going to be drawn to Jesus’ loving welcome maybe even quicker than the “right kind.”

The Bible says about Jesus, “He was counted among those who had committed crimes” (Luke 22:37). I love joining Jesus there where He loves to be - among the criminals, the “wrong kind.”





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OUR MISSION

***“To Share God’s Law and
the Saving Gospel of
Jesus Christ With People
Who Are Institutionalized,
and Their Families.”***

SPECIAL GIFTS & MEMORIALS

5/6/2010-8/17/2010

IN MEMORY OF:

Leola Affeldt
by Mr. & Mrs. Charlie Thompson
Pastor Julian Anderson
by Mr. & Mrs. Duane Anderson
Roy G. Bergum
by Mrs. Terry Bergum
Kenneth Bock
by Mrs. Bev Bock
Carol Davidson
by Mr. Daniel Davidson
Martin Eisenman
by Mrs. Lucille Eisenman
Rev. Elwood Habermann
by Barbara Bohn
Rev. & Mrs. David Tetzlaff
Linda Habermann
by Rev. & Mrs. David Tetzlaff
Orval Hintz
by Mrs. Marilyn Hintz
Carol Kuehn
by Mr. Mark Kuehn
Mr. & Mrs. George Schaser
Howard Maertz
by Mrs. Gertrude Maertz

Roger Manthe
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Paul W. Rodenbeck
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by Ms. Nancy Schmidt

Donald R. Schroeder
by Mr. & Mrs. Earl Pappenfuss
Edwin A. Sell
by Mrs. Lois Sell
Martin Sponholz
by Mr. & Mrs. Robert Johnson
Bob Steinhagen
by Mrs. Verna Steinhagen
Loren Stolte
by Gloria Blauert

IN HONOR OF:

Our Savior Jesus
by Rev. & Mrs. Raymond Cox
Edith Thompson
by Rev. & Mrs. Donald Thompson
Imogene Hoeffner Birthday
by Mr. Lloyd Hoeffner
**Jack & Suzanne Kreienbrink 50th
wedding anniversary**
Mr. & Mrs. Michael Walker
**Pastor Pasbrig for years served
in the ministry**
June Kelm

Agnes Poehler 88th Birthday
Elsie Schroeder

IN THANKSGIVING:

In Thanksgiving for A lifetime of
hearing the Word!
Sue Miller
In Thanksgiving for Family Help and
Support
Mr. Raymond Seibel