Implementing a Prison Ministry as an Active Factor to Refresh the Spiritual Life at the Salem Seventh-day Adventist Church

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Andrews University

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ABSTRACT

IMPLEMENTING A PRISON MINISTRY AS AN ACTIVE FACTOR TO REFRESH THE SPIRITUAL LIFE AT THE SALEM SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

by

Florin Liga

Adviser: Erich Baumgartner
Title: IMPLEMENTING A PRISON MINISTRY AS AN ACTIVE FACTOR TO REFRESH THE SPIRITUAL LIFE AT THE SALEM SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

Name of researcher: Florin Liga

Name and degree of faculty adviser: Erich Baumgartner, Ph.D.

Date completed: February 2013

Problem

With a history of almost 70 years of Adventist presence in Marion County, Illinois, the church had gradually shifted from a church growth focus to a survival focus. The Adventist traditions had been kept faithfully, but the people in the church suffered because their witnessing didn’t impact their community and neighborhood anymore. While they were ready for new outreach tools they were hesitant to try such a new approach that challenged the status quo and ultimately created a demand for spiritual renewal in their personal and church life. Prison ministry to a population group the church had previously not ministered to was introduced as an avenue to break out of this pattern of self-absorption.
Method

The task of this project is to describe the prison ministry strategy we employed to inspire and motivate members and non-members attending our church as an active factor of refreshing their spiritual life. The theological foundation along with a literature review provided the framework for developing and implementing a prison ministry to the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Salem, Illinois. In addition, four training sessions were developed for the church leaders interested in implementing the prison ministry strategy in their own context. Finally, the impact of this ministry on member involvement and its influence on the congregation were evaluated.

Results

The 10 participants who accepted to be part of the implementation training for prison ministry were very positive about their experience. The perceived impact of the jail and prison ministry in the Salem Adventist Church was assessed with a survey given to a group of 12 members who volunteered to participate in the survey. These 12 included five members who did not participate in the jail and prison ministry project. The survey assessed the spiritual satisfaction of the church members, based on two essential Christian values: evangelism and community outreach.

Overall the evaluation showed a clear difference in the level of satisfaction members reported in their spiritual life when participating in jail and prison ministry compared with those who did not participate. Direct involvement seemed to improve or keep the level of spiritual satisfaction high. This spiritual satisfaction score not only reported personal growth, but also extended a beneficial influence into the entire local
church. Thus the implemented ministry reported in this study can be considered as the catalyst for the refreshing of the spiritual life of the church.

Conclusions

Prison ministry can be a successful way to lead a church beyond its crippling focus on self to practical engagement in a world disabled by dysfunction. This ministry results in transformed lives. Prisoners residing in correctional facilities today touched and transformed by the power of God experienced through this ministry returned to their families as role models, to the church as a gift to the Body of Christ, and to the community as evidence of the love, power, and grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Although I need to emphasize that prison ministry is not for everybody and not for every church, I am confident that the present model can be a source of inspiration for many churches. A jail and prison ministry can empower any pastor, educator, or lay leader to do effective ministry. Prison life provides a ready-made context in which the story of our salvation fits well and is often welcomed by those seeking for a change in their lives.

For this reason I recommend to the Seventh-day Adventist church and its leaders, from the local to the national level, to support and encourage every initiative of believers for starting a jail and prison ministry in their local churches. Rediscovering evangelistic success and finding fulfillment in outreach will provide vision and empowerment in mission to any church who experienced failure in the past. In this way I sincerely hope that this project will make a cherished contribution to the church I love and to its members preparing themselves and the world for the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.
Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

IMPLEMENTING A PRISON MINISTRY AS AN ACTIVE FACTOR
TO REFRESH THE SPIRITUAL LIFE AT THE SALEM
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

A Project Document

Presented in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Ministry

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APPROVAL BY THE COMMITTEE:

Adviser, Erich Baumgartner

Director, DMin Program Skip Bell

Romulus Chelbegean

Dean, SDA Theological Seminary Denis Fortin

Walt A. Williams

Date approved
To my father, Enoh, who was imprisoned for 4 years by the Romanian Communist Government for his faithfulness to the Christian values. By his model, I was encouraged to stand up for mistreated and oppressed people neglected or abandoned by their family, friends, church and the entire society.

&

To my gracious wife, Livia, and children, Michael and Joseph, who sacrificed many days and hours apart which would have otherwise been spent together, but who along with me, long to see a better world impacted by our loving ministry.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

We are told in Scripture to "Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them" (Heb 13:3). When the theological grounds of jail and prison ministry are precisely articulated in their proper perspective, the nature of this ministry is more clearly understood, and the chances of impacting our society and making a difference in our world significantly increase.

When I accepted a ministry call from the Illinois Conference to a pastorate of a four-church district, I started to look for new ways of motivating my members to become actively involved in church outreach, especially in those areas that are not aggressively targeted by other churches and ministries in our geographical district. Because of my burden for prison ministry and for setting a personal pattern for this type of ministry, I became a volunteer chaplain of the Big Muddy River correctional center in Southern Illinois, where I supervised a weekly service for 60 people. A few months later, I accepted the invitation of the Salem Ministerial Alliance to serve as the Jail Ministry Coordinator for Marion County Jail.

Having witnessed the personal positive outcome of these jail and prison ministries mentioned above, the question that comes to mind is how can the local church and its members benefit from becoming active into this type of ministry? The answer may lie in the fact that a majority of church members are not involved in any outreach projects, and
in some cases many of them are waiting and praying that God will send them to preach salvation for others. This project seeks to discover an effective prison ministry that may impact and refresh the spiritual life of the entire church body.

**Statement of the Problem**

With a history of almost 70 years of Adventist presence in southern Illinois, the church has gradually shifted from a church-growth focus to a survival focus. It seems that the people in the community have ceased to be interested in religious services held exclusively in our church building. The Adventist traditions have been kept faithfully, but the local church has not initiated any intentional relationships or activities outside the church. Thus the church has developed a *fortress* mentality of an exclusive group that seems content to wait for God to send people into the church and become faithful Seventh-day Adventists. No ties or communication exist between the Adventist church and other Christians or un-churched people living in the neighborhood of the church.

This mindset must have developed over time. For the last decade traditional evangelistic means no longer yielded fruit. Yet the church saw no alternatives and continued to do its duty of evangelism only to feel more and more isolated from the community who no longer responded to its efforts. The interesting reality I encountered was that members still advocated strongly for traditional evangelistic outreach even though their memory and stories showed that nobody expected to really reach anyone. Apparently decades of faithful struggles and failures had created a disconnection from the reality of the community and its needs. While the people in the church suffered because their witnessing didn’t impact their community and neighborhood, they could not see that their own approach needed to change. Traditional evangelism alone was not enough to
reach the multitudes. Traditional evangelistic methods use few workers and it is most often done by one gifted individual who comes into an area for a limited period of time. Also, traditional evangelistic methods are expensive. They often consist of big campaigns involving advertising, literature, tents, stadiums, halls, speakers, musical groups, other expensive resources, and tools that small local churches can hardly afford.

When I moved to the community, the most common concern of church members was that evangelical Christians referred to the Seventh-day Adventist church as a cult. This perception annoyed some members into an openness to try something new in order to change that image. However, most thought that no effort could ever break down that prejudice.

Thus, on the one hand, they were ready for a recommendation for a unique and effective outreach tools. But on the other hand, they were afraid to accept any major change in their approach. Something that fitted into the basic Christianity, without challenging the status quo, would be the way to start. In this context, the opportunity for an effective, fresh approach to a spiritual renewal materialized in the jail and prison ministry that is the basis for this study. This ministry has shown to have the potential to touch people where they are, outside the church building. It proved effective in a short time and did not require great financial means. Therefore, prison ministry became one of the avenues to break out of this pattern of inward self-absorption.

**Statement of the Task**

The task of this project is to describe the prison ministry strategy we employed to inspire and motivate members and non-members attending our church to refresh the spiritual life in the Adventist church of Salem, Illinois. In addition I developed four
training sessions for leaders interested in implementing a prison-ministry strategy for their context. Finally, I evaluated the effectiveness of my past experience by determining the impact of this ministry on member involvement and its influence on the congregation.

**Justification for the Project**

Despite the fact that many motives can be listed to justify this project, the main determination will be expressed in three observations:

First, the Seventh-day Adventist church believes that outreach is part of the core value of our purpose and existence. Many are missing special blessings from the Lord by not being involved in outreach ministry. This project aimed to increase understanding and interest for this type of outreach project, especially among those members who may have relatives jailed or detained in state or federal prisons.

Second, while the project has powerful Scriptural support, many church members have only a superficial understanding of prison ministry. Some condemn and criticize this type of outreach out of ignorance. For this reason an intentional training process for proper understanding, development, and involvement in this ministry was needed.

Finally, a church that successfully participates in a local and regional prison ministry project will potentially also be motivated to open its doors to additional ministries. Thus the church will find authentic purpose for its existence and it will be enriched by effective participation in the life of the community.

**Description of the Project Process**

Theological reflection for this project focuses on three biblical areas. First, the power of the Scripture in a prison context was explored by identifying main biblical stories. Second, the biblical principles relevant to prison ministry in the teaching of Jesus
were examined. Third, a theological component building on our eschatological view and preparation for the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ was explored and linked to prison ministry.

Relevant current literature was reviewed. This review included books and selected articles in the areas of prison ministry and church outreach, correctional ministry, discipleship, educational resources for incarcerated students, family ministry, and inmate correspondence courses. I also explored literature on transformational leadership.

The designed strategy contained four training sessions to organize the process of planning, preparing and implementing a prison and jail ministry. The four training sessions were conducted in 2008 at the local church on four consecutive weekends. After the training session, the participants joined in an authentic field implementation of the jail and prison ministry strategy.

A survey with the present members of the church was conducted. The purpose of this survey, performed four years after the project was implemented, was to evaluate the extended impact of the jail and prison ministry in Salem Adventist Church and to assess the spiritual satisfaction of the church members, both for participants and non-participants in the jail and prison ministry project.

**Expectations From This Project**

This project should increase personal and collective involvement of the church members in the life of the church as they look forward to improve their own spiritual life and to positively impact others for eternity.

This project sought to provide a potential model for involving the local church in community outreach by using the venue of the jail and prison ministry.
This project will hopefully be a model motivating and organizing prison ministry in the local church as a permanent ministry.

This project helped me develop my leadership skills in becoming a key facilitator for motivating and implementing any important ministry needed to be added for the health of the local church/district.
CHAPTER 2

A THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR PRISON MINISTRY

Introduction

A Christian ministry to prisoners is not just a complementary and inoffensive gesture simply to be tolerated. It is a core value of Christianity named by Jesus Himself when He presented His *mission statement* at the beginning of His ministry (Luke 4: 18). This ministry is not specialized, it is simple and it is one ministry among many. Still, in our denomination, it is neither very common nor widespread. When the theological grounds of jail and prison ministry are precisely articulated in their proper perspective, the nature of this ministry is more clearly defined and correctly understood, and the chances of impacting our society and making a difference in our world significantly increase.

One of the strongest reasons to minister to inmates comes from Jesus himself in Matthew 25:31-46. In this passage, Jesus makes a comparison to a shepherd separating his flock, just as he will separate all of us at the end of days. The criteria for those who are blessed, those who enter the kingdom, is surprisingly not what we would think. There’s no mention of going to church regularly, reading your Bible, or all of the usual events we associate with being a Christian. What Jesus does mention is how they’ve given food to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, housing for strangers, clothing for the poor, care for the sick, and, lastly, visitation for the prisoner. (Jail Ministry of Otsego County, NY, 2011)

Jesus identifies Himself with people in severe need, saying "whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me” (Matt 25:40). In understanding this scriptural passage, it is essential to realize that Jesus started His ministry in a religious and cultural context where exclusion was very common. “Many of his Jewish
contemporaries understood their status as God’s chosen people to be evidence of God’s care for them, but not the gentiles” (Roberts, 2004).

In contrast to this perception, Jesus enjoyed talking and eating with moral, religious, and cultural outsiders. And, even more outrageous, Jesus invited a tax collector, Levi, to follow Him as one of His closest disciples. This type of inclusiveness was considered very unsafe and also unacceptable in the time of Jesus. When the leaders of the Pharisees questioned Jesus asking why He mixed with such outcasts, he answered: “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I have come to call not the righteous, but sinners” (Mark 2:17). Jesus made it clear that His mission involved reaching out and drawing to God those whom the religious leaders ignored, excluded, and even despised. And those in jail and prisons were always included in this list of outcasts (Roberts, 2004).

Therefore, it is essential to develop a theological approach with principles and lessons that help leaders and groups as they accept the call for jail and prison ministry and also to discover a broader contemporary application for prison ministry and its impact on our complex contemporary society.

This chapter will concentrate on two main areas that guided me while doing this project. First, this chapter will reflect on prisons and prisoners in the Bible. Second, it will define the Prison Theology concept and its goal.
Prisons and Prisoners in the Bible

General Overview

There are 127 references to prison and prisoners in the Bible (KJV)—from Joseph’s imprisonment in Genesis 37 to Satan’s imprisonment in Revelation 20 (Bromiley, 1979, pp. 973-975).

Many great characters of the Bible experienced imprisonment. In the Old Testament we have Joseph, Samson, Jeremiah, Micaiah, Zedekiah, Daniel. The New Testament has John the Baptist, Peter, James, John, Silas, Paul, Junia, Epaphras, Aristarchus, and even Jesus was kept under guard after his arrest and execution, and after his death, Jesus was restrained in a tomb. But probably the most famous prisoner of the Bible was the Apostle Paul, who had a genuine career in the prison system (Marshall, 2002, p. 5).

Prior to his conversion, Paul was someone who imprisoned other people. He locked up countless Christian believers, both male and female, and on occasions cast his judicial vote for their execution (Acts 8:3; 9:1-2; 22:4-5; 26:10; Phil 3:6). After his conversion however, the imprisoner became the imprisoned, Paul’s distinctive identity that he could refer to himself as a “prisoner of Jesus Christ” (Eph 3:1; Phlm 1:9). In 2 Corinthians, Paul speaks of enduring numerous “afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger” (2 Cor 6:5; 11:23-28). The book of Acts records Paul being locked up on three occasions—at Philippi, Caesarea, and Rome (Acts 16:19-40; 23:10; 24:27-28; 28:16-20.30). Paul was not alone in this experience. Peter and John were also repeatedly thrown in jail, and, like Paul, they too were sometimes busted out of jail by divine intervention (Acts 5:19, 22-23; 12:6-11; 16:25-26). The early church was actually led by a bunch of jail inmates, and God was primary partner in their escape. (Marshall, 2002, p. 5)

Prisons and Prisoners in the Old Testament

According to the Holman Bible dictionary (1991), the ancient Law Codes did not contain evidence for Old Testament Imprisonment as a legal punishment. The Mosaic Law allowed for a place of custody until the case was decided (Lev 24:12; Num 15:34),
but beginning with the Persian period the Bible mentions incarceration as a penalty for breaking the religious law (Ezra 7:26).

Prisons mentioned in the Old Testament were under the control of the crown. Joseph was put in a royal prison in Egypt (Gen 39:20), apparently attached to the house of the captain of the guard (Gen 40:3). Asa of Judah (2 Chr 16:10) and Ahab of Israel (1 Kgs 22:26-27), made use of prisons, probably associated with the palace. The experience of Jeremiah, however, provides the most interesting glimpses of prisons and prison life. The royal prisons were apparently not large, as the one in which Jeremiah was initially placed was a converted private house (Jer 37:15). He was confined to an underground dungeon (Jer 37:16), perhaps a converted cistern. Jeremiah later was placed under house arrest in the “court of the guard” (Jer 37:20-21). There, he was available for consultation with the king (Jer 38:14: Jer 38:28), able to conduct business (Jer 32:2-3; 32:6-12), and able to speak freely (Jer 38:1-4). Because the latter enraged the princes, Jeremiah was confined for a time to a muddy cistern in the “court of the guard” (Jer 38:4-13).

Persons were confined in royal prisons for offending the king (Gen 40:1-3), perhaps by political intrigue. In Israel, prophets were jailed for denouncing royal policy (2 Chr 16:10), predicting ill of the king (1 Kgs 22:26-27), and suspected collaboration with the enemy (Jer 37:11-15). Political prisoners in Assyrian and Babylonian prisons included former kings of rebellious nations (2 Kgs 17:4; 24:15; 25:27; Jer 52:11). Samson became a prisoner in a Philistine prison (Judg 16:21). Prisoners of war were usually either killed or enslaved.

The lot of prisoners was pitiable, sometimes consisting of meager rations (1 Kgs 22:27) and hard labor (Judg 16:21). In some cases, prisoners were restrained and tortured by the stocks or collar (2 Chr 16:10; Jer 29:26). Jehoiachin was clothed in special prison garments in Babylon (2 Kgs 25:29). Prison life became a symbol of oppression and suffering (Ps 79:11), and release from prison provided a picture of restoration or salvation (Pss 102:20; 142:7; 146:7; Isa 61:1; Zech 9:11-12). (Butler, 1991)

Prisons and Prisoners in the New Testament


For some of these offenses, public prisons were also employed (Acts 5:18-19). John the Baptist was arrested for criticizing the king (Luke 3:19-20) and seems to have
been held in a royal prison attached to the palace (Mark 6:17-29). Later, Peter was held under heavy security, consisting of chains, multiple guards, and iron doors (Acts 12:5-11).

Paul, who imprisoned others (Acts 8:3; 22:4; 26:10), was often in prison himself (2 Cor 11:23). His experience provides the most detail on prisons in the New Testament world. In Philippi, he and Silas were placed under the charge of a lone jailer, who “put them in the innermost cell and fastened their feet in the stocks” (Acts 16:23-24 NRSV). Excavations at Philippi have uncovered a crypt revered by early Christians as the prison and adorned with frescos depicting Paul and Silas in Philippi. If the identification is correct, the crypt's small size eliminates any doubt that when Paul and Silas sang hymns, “the prisoners were listening to them” (Acts 16:25). Perhaps the crypt, originally a cistern, served only as the “innermost cell” (Acts 16:24) for maximum security or solitary confinement. In Jerusalem, Paul was held in the barracks of the Roman cohort (Acts 23:16-18). After his transfer to Caesarea, he was confined with some freedom in the headquarters of Roman procurators and was allowed to receive visitors (Acts 23:35; Acts 24:23). As he and other prisoners were transferred to Rome by ship, Paul was again given some freedom (Acts 27:1; Acts 27:3); but when shipwreck became imminent, the soldiers resolved to kill them all lest they should escape (Acts 27:42-43). While awaiting trial in Rome, Paul remained under constant guard in a kind of house arrest (Acts 28:16-17; Acts 28:30), met his own expenses, and was free to receive visitors and preach the gospel “openly and unhindered” (Acts 28:30). Paul considered his imprisonment as for Christ (Eph 3:1; 4:1; Phil 1:13-14; Phlm 1:1; 1:9).

The situation for prisoners remained depressing in New Testament times, and concern for such persons is a virtue expected by Christ of every disciple (Matt 25:36; 25:39; 25:43-44). It is Satan who will be imprisoned during the millennium (Rev 20:1-3; 20:7). (Butler, 1991)

**The Function of Imprisonment in Biblical Time**

In examining the Bible for guidance for a Christian perspective on prisons, we must always keep in mind that imprisonment has served different functions in biblical times than in our modern contemporary society. Civilization at that time was very different, with stronger communal bonds and a different range of disciplinary options available to those in authority. Yet there are still some significant things we can learn from the Bible applicable to our situation. According to Marshall in his work *Prison, prisoners, and the Bible* (2002), we can identify four observations about biblical evidence of imprisonment and what they can teach us today.
Cause of Great Suffering

In the ancient world prisons were usually underground dungeons or empty cisterns or wells, or pits in ground. They were dark and miserable places. Jeremiah was put in “a cistern house” for many days (Jer 37:16). When he was released for interrogation, he begged not to be returned to his cell fearing he would die there (Jer 37:20). Micaiah was put in prison on starvation rations of bread and water (1 Kgs 22:27). The psalmist speaks of “prisoners in misery and in irons” (Ps 107:10), captives who “groan” and are “doomed to die” (Pss 79:11; 102:20). Job considers Sheol to be preferable to imprisonment, for at least there “the prisoners are at ease together [and] do not hear the voice of the task master” (Job 3:18). (Marshall, 2002, p. 6)

Things were no better in New Testament times. With few exceptions, the Roman prisons were dark, disease and vermin infested, and overcrowded places. It was common for inmates to die while incarcerated, either from disease or starvation (Matt 25:36), brutal torture (Matt 18:34; Heb 13:3), execution (Mark 6:14-29), or suicide (Phil 1:19-24). Imprisonment is commonly described by ancient authors as a fate worse than death (Wansink, 1996, pp. 27-125).

Certainly our prisons are more humane in terms of physical treatment of inmates. But they continue to be a source of great suffering. All prisons are intentionally designed to cause anguish through the forced removal of freedom, the loss of independence and dignity, and extended isolation from the people who care for them the most. First of all, our society uses imprisonment because it hurts. God created humans as free creatures and every time people are detained in prison their humanity is offended. To take freedom away from people is to deprive the heart of human dignity and distinctiveness. So, first, the biblical record invites us to recognize the intense pain imposed by imprisonment and why it hurts so much (Marshall, 2002, p. 6).
More Oppression Than Justice

According to Griffith (1993), prison was not recommended as a criminal sanction in Old Testament legislation. Prison appears as a judicial consent against illegal action only one place in the Bible and there prison was simply authorized by the Persian King Artaxerxes (Ezra 7:26). “Prisons were later introduced into Israel, perhaps under foreign influence” (Griffith, 1993, p. 89). Furthermore, Griffith (as cited in Marshall, 2002) identified a number of factors that discouraged Israel from making excessive use of prisons:

First, “Prison systems have historically grown up beside the development of military establishments. Israel was late in developing a formalized military organization, and so jails were also late in coming” (Marshall, 2002, p. 7).

Second, “Biblical law favored restitution over retribution. Restitution was a way of setting wrongs right and expressing repentance towards God. Imprisonment of wrongdoers does nothing to facilitate restitution or repair” (Marshall, 2002, p. 7).

Third, Israel had a strong sense of collective responsibility for submission to the covenant with God, and avoided condemning individuals. When individuals made a mistake, the entire nation took the responsibility. “For Israel, the fullest response to crime was not the isolated punishment of an individual lawbreaker but the repentance of the entire nation” (Griffith, 1993, p. 93).

Fourth, Israel's experience of slavery in Egypt left a permanent scar on the people’s memory, influencing their social policy. Israel remembered forever the resentment of slavery, and God's action of setting her free from bondage. Therefore, they never used imprisonment as a form of criminal punishment (Exod 22:1-3). However, Israel practiced a form of slavery, but it was a more humane establishment than modern
imprisonment, where slaves were permitted to partake in normal family and community life (Marshall, 2002, p. 7).

While prolonged imprisonment was not used in biblical times as a form of criminal punishment, incarceration was used for political and military reasons. Even though the prisoners had disobeyed the ruling authorities, and were technical criminals, they were not jailed because of any criminal code that prescribed incarceration as a punishment. It was a way of silencing annoying prophets who voiced criticism of the reigning king or gave him unwanted advice (Jer 32:2-5; 1 Kgs 22:27; 2 Chr 16:1-10; 18:26; Matt 11:2). It was a means of keeping defeated enemies under control (Judg 16:21; 25:2; 2 Kgs 17:4; 24:15; 25:2-7; Jer 39:1-7; 52:3-11, 31-34; Luke 23:19), or detaining people accused of disloyalty (Gen 39:20; 40:1-22; 2 Kgs 17:4). It was a way of holding individuals before selling them into slavery, or putting prisoners of war to servitude (Gen 37:24, 28). It could be used to prevent debtors from escaping, and also could be an added incentive for their families to ransom them from bondage (Matt 5:23-26; 18:30). New Testament prison often serves as an instrument of religious persecution (Acts 5:18, 21, 23; 16:19-40; 24:27; 28:16, 20, 30; Col 4:3; 2 Cor. 6:5; 11:23-28; Eph 3:1; Phlm 1:9; 2 Tim 1:8; Rev 2:20) (Marshall, 2002, p. 8).

“In many places today, prison still serves as an instrument of political oppression. There are hundreds of thousands of prisoners of conscience all over the world” (Marshall, 2002, p. 8). Lamentations 3:34-36 discloses a God sensitive to abuse, and implies human accountability to act responsible when such exploitation occur: “To crush underfoot all prisoners in the land, to deny people their rights before the Most High, to deprive them of justice—would not the Lord see such things?”
In many nations around the world today, Christians are being persecuted for their faith. In some of these nations, it is illegal to own a Bible, to share your faith in Christ and also to change your faith or teach your children about Jesus. Those who boldly follow Christ—in spite of government edicts or radical opposition—can face harassment, arrest, torture, and even death. I grew up in the country of Romania as a son of a political inmate who was arrested and imprisoned for the simple reason of being a Seventh-day Adventist. And just like him, hundreds were punished and imprisoned for the same reason. Yet Christians continue to meet for worship and to witness for Christ, and the church in restricted nations is growing. Prisoners in the Bible are thus always depicted as the victims of injustice, and stories about prisoners are invariably told from the point of view of the prisoner, not from the perspective of those who did the imprisoning.

According to the Old Testament, the people of Israel placed a strong importance on communal responsibility for sin and transgression. Contrary to today we strongly emphasize individual freedom and personal responsibility when it comes to crime. According to Snyder (2001, as cited in Marshall, 2002), we banish offenders from our society denying that individuals, “who choose to commit crimes and are accountable for their actions, are constrained by environmental circumstances, and it is unfair, to speak of crime solely in terms of personal free will” (Marshall, 2002, p. 5).

We can observe that people will have different reactions according to their varying social situations. Some people will be tempted to try crime, while in other social contexts they would respect and obey the law. Some conditions like poverty, unemployment, social bigotry, family dysfunction, and especially drug and alcohol abuse, will instigate crime. A substantial percentage of offenders have been victims of different
crimes during their childhood before they became offenders. Definitely, the society has an important role in the creation of criminals by the way she expresses the moral indignation at individual offenders (Snyder, 2001, p. 116).

The criminal justice system can oppress as well as protect; it can persecute as well as punish. Once again, the alertness of the biblical tradition to this fact should caution against a superficial trust in the capacity of the cage to conquer sin. (Marshall, 2002, p. 10)

Related With the Spirit and Power of Death

Because of its potential to crush the spirit, the mind and the body, every time when “prison” is used in Scripture, imprisonment is presented as a symbol of different forms of human sufferings and sorrows. In fact, according to Griffith there is a close association in scripture between imprisonment and the spirit of death itself.

The Bible identifies the prison with the spirit and power of death. As such, the problem with prisons has nothing to do with the utilitarian criteria of deterrence. As such, the problem is not that prisons have failed to forestall violent criminality and murderous rampages; the problem is that prisons are identical in spirit to the violence and murder that they pretend to combat. The biblical discernment of the spirit of the prison demythologizes our pretenses. Whenever we cage people, we are in reality fueling and participating in the same spirit we claim to renounce. In the biblical understanding, the spirit of the prison is the spirit of death. (Griffith, 1993, p. 106)

If Griffith is right, we ought not to be surprised at the failure of the prison system today. It generates hatred and hostility contrary to its corrective claim. This is why, in the Bible, God's solution is not to refine the prison system but to set prisoners free.

God Wants to set Prisoners Free

We have seen that prisons in the Bible are usually associated with injustice and oppression, which are extensions of the spirit of death. Because of this, biblical reflection on prison is uniformly negative. According to Olson (as cited in Marshall, 2002):
Scripture records some of the worst crimes and most heinous violence the world has ever known, but nowhere in scripture do we find a divine endorsement of prison. Never, in any part of the Bible, is prison part of God’s way. Always they are used to oppress and there is no evidence of good prisons. (p. 11)

Many Bible verses in the Scripture emphasize a God who wants to liberate captives from their bondage (Deut 7:8; 24:18; Pss 68:6; 79:11; 102:19-20; 107:10-16; 118:5; 146:7; Isa 42:7; 45:13; 49:8-9; 61:1; Mic 6:4; Zech 9:11; Acts 5:19; 16:25-26; 1 Pet 3:19; Rev 2:10). In Ps 102:19, the psalmist speaks of a God who “looks down from his holy height, from heaven . . . to hear the groans of the prisoners, to set free those who were doomed to die.” The God who “made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them,” is the same God who “upholds the cause of the oppressed and gives food to the hungry” and is also the God who “sets the prisoners free” (Ps 146:6-7).

One striking task expected of the awaited Messiah was to “to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness” (Isa 42:6-7). According to Luke 4:16-20, this is precisely the role Jesus claims for Himself at the beginning of His ministry:

He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.

In Colossians 2:15 and Ephesians 4:8, Scripture was not just talking about a spiritual or psychological liberation for those imprisoned by sin and guilt, but it was also talking about freeing people from the material structures and ideological systems which robbed them of freedom and dignity (Griffith, 1993, p. 109). I like the wording and description of Marshall (2002), when he reflects on Jesus practical ministry:

Jesus’ entire ministry of feeding the hungry, healing the sick, forgiving the guilty, embracing the outsider, loving the enemy and confronting the oppressor was a
fleshing out of his proclamation of release to the captives. Ironically it cost Jesus his own freedom and his own life to do so, with the convicted murderer Barabbas being the first literal prisoner to benefit from it (Mark 15:15; Matt 27:26). And others followed, such as the inmates at Philippi who also had their chains struck off when Paul and Silas were freed by divine intervention (Acts 16:25-26). (Marshal, 2002, p. 12)

A Prison Theology and its Purpose

Definition of Terms

*Prison:* According to *Easton's Bible dictionary*, the first occasion which we read of a prison is in the history of Joseph in Egypt. Then Potiphar, “Joseph's master, took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were bound” (Gen 39:20-23). The Hebrew word used here רַחֲשָׁן (sohar) means a round tower or fortress. It seems to have been a part of Potiphar's house, a place in which state prisoners were kept. The Mosaic Law made no provision for imprisonment as a punishment. In the wilderness two persons were "put in ward" (Lev 24:12; Num 15:34), but it was only until the mind of God concerning them should be ascertained. Prisons and prisoners are mentioned in the book of Psalms (69:33; 79:11; 142:7). Samson was confined in a Philistine prison (Judg 16:21, 25). In the subsequent history of Israel frequent references are made to prisons (1 Kgs 22:27; 2 Kgs 17:4; 25:27, 29; 2 Chr 16:10; Isa 42:7; Jer 32:2). Prisons seem to have been common in New Testament times (Matt 11:2; 25:36, 43). The apostles were put into the "common prison" at the instance of the Jewish council (Acts 5:18, 23; 8:3); and at Philippi Paul and Silas were thrust into the “inner prison” (Acts 16:24; comp. 4:3; 12:4, 5); (Easton's, 1897).

*Prison Ministry:* Here, we will define prison ministry as any program in a prison context with a primary goal of providing religious or spiritual support to both believing
and non-believing inmates. It is a mission to seek the inmates’ reconciliation to God, family, and community through the power of knowing Jesus Christ. The key method in accomplishing this mission is equipping and empowering local churches and volunteers to reach out to prisoners, ex-prisoners, and their families.

_Theology:_ Of the various ways to define theology, I like the contemporary theologian Douglas John Hall's dynamic notion of theology as “an ongoing activity of the whole church that aims at clarifying what ‘Gospel’ must mean here and now” (Hall, 2003, p. 177). Making an intentional distinction between _the Gospel_ and _Gospel_, Hall explains, “the Gospel” is most often thought to be some fixed, once-for-all codification of truth, already well-known by the church, which sees its Christian duty to preserve and proclaim it. What Christians assume by the gospel is the _good news_ of the familiar story of Jesus life, His death and resurrection and, the empowerment of the Holy Spirit (p. 178).

It seems that description of the gospel betrays the true meaning of _εὐαγγέλιον_—the Greek word translated gospel or good news. Good news is truly good because it challenges and displaces bad news, and continually breaks into our reality, offering another alternative of what could be, another prospective into the future. It is good because it impacts our lives in relationship with God (Hall, 2003, p. 179).

Hall maintains that Gospel is discovered, not possessed, and it is revealed in our struggle, as communities and persons of faith, to comprehend what is going on in our world. Prison theology plunges us into a world on the inside mostly unseen to us on the outside. It is the world of those suffering in overcrowded, bland, monotonous, controlled, noisy correctional institutions for days, weeks, months, years, or life.
From Apostle Paul to Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Apostle Paul wrote letters to the Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, and Ephesians while in prison. Traditionally these letters have been grouped together because they all came from Paul, the prisoner. There seems to be no further resemblance (Houlden, 1970, pp. 15-28). In Paul’s letter to Philemon, the only private letter from him that we have, he writes referring to Onesimus—a fugitive slave and probably a thief, “If he has done you any damage, or if he owes you anything, put it down to my account—I will repay it” (Phil 18-19). Onesimus, while in prison, comes in contact with Paul and become a Christian. Paul gave Onesimus a letter to give to Philemon. He asks Philemon to receive him back, not as a slave but as a brother in Christ, as he would receive Paul himself. This letter from Paul while in prison has served as a model and motivation for those involved in prison ministry. Paul on more than one occasion teaches that in Christ there is neither Greek nor Jew, neither slave nor free (Gal 3:28; Col 3:11). In Christ we are to treat each other as equals, not as low-class or offender, but as brother.

“Brother, we are searching, we are calling you! Brother, do you hear me?” (Bonhoeffer, Bethge, & Bowden, 2001, pp. 349-351). These are moving words from the poem written from a prison cell in Germany by pastor, theologian, and martyr, Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Arrested, tried, and convicted for conspiracy against Adolf Hitler, Bonhoeffer spent two years in prison before being executed in 1945. Bonhoeffer left behind many writings, including letters from prison, helping those who have never been a prisoner learn what that experience can be like.

Modern Christianity has been involved in humanitarian ministries throughout the history of the prison system in the United States going back to the 18th century with advocacy for prisoner rights by the Quakers and an organization formed in 1787 known
today as the Prison Society. However, little attention has been paid to prison theology. With Bonhoeffer’s imploration to be heard as a starting point, we move to the prison ministry context of our day and time and add, “Brother, sister, friend, stranger, anybody, do you hear the cry of the men and women in prison?”

Prison Theology is a Theology of Liberation

This prison theology is a theology of liberation, grounded in Christianity, which reflects on and actualizes the meaning of that liberation for the oppressed in jail and prison, so they can know that their struggle for political, social, religious, judicial and economic justice is consistent with the gospel of Jesus Christ (Pounder, 2008, pp.278-291).

However, unlike other forms of liberation theology, there is no key spokesperson or representative, nor is there extensive or academic recognition of this form of theology. As a result, there is no prison theology movement, or formal and systematic expression to its meaning (Moltmann, 1993, p. 3). In this context, my approach is only a prison theology, and not the prison theology.

Prison Theology is Contextual Theology

According to Pounder (2008), prison theology seeks to determine the actual nature of the context and respond to that context from a Christian viewpoint. “It seeks to make explicit, specific and concrete what our Christian faith means in relation to the prison culture” (Pounder, 2008, p. 281).

This not only means theoretical understanding of what prison culture is, but actual personal involvement with inmates wherever they are incarcerated. Prison theology fits into the prison context when intentional Christians go into jails and prisons, to
communicate with those confined, speaking and listening, letting the inmates see them, encouraging the inmates to tell their own stories and speak on their own behalf.

There is no we and them in prison theology, but only a definite and profound us! Those on the inside and those on the outside become a new community, which is the primary goal of prison ministry, while those working in corrections are instructed to keep strict professional boundaries and manifest an intentional effort not to build community (Pounder, 2008, p. 286).

**The Goal of Prison Theology**

The goal of prison theology is to immerse people into the reality of the oppression of prisoners and the system that embraces them, and in that process, to motivate the church to recognize its liberating potential as both recipient and conveyer of concrete and specific gospel, which is the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the empowerment of the Spirit and the work of our God in human’s heart. (Pounder, 2008, p. 282)

I think that this is a process of gospel contextualization especially for the prison context. It begins with an understanding of the value of humankind as created by God in His own image, addresses the question of hope, personalizes the presence of God by being present with people in their loneliness, emphasizes the power of offering and receiving the forgiveness, deals with issues of power and control, and follows the various pathways that humans take in their way of walking toward and with God.

According to Pounder (2008), prison theology can enter into a dialogue with those in prison by sharing life-giving characteristics and identity: liberation, hope, and justice.
Key Characteristics of Prison Theology

Liberation

Liberation in prison theology does not mean the accountability and responsibility of a person serving an objective and just sentence of law is taken away. God offered the gift of the Law to protect His creation and in the preservation of life. However, without some tangible experience of freedom, the gospel message becomes an empty code. Accordingly, central to prison theology is liberation from external oppression (Pounder, 2008, p. 282).

First of all, liberation points to freedom from a persistent belief of those who have never been incarcerated, of their superiority over the imprisoned. This belief creates prejudice leading to harmful discriminatory behavior reflected in dehumanizing labeling or actions against those in the system. “Prisoners are people and need to be recognized by their proper names, not demeaning categories” (Pounder, 2008, p. 282).

Second, liberation means freedom from cruel conditions: freedom from fear of harm and violence. It means jail and prison cells with windows, sufficient medical care, including sufficient mental health care for inmates suffering serious mental illness, which in many cases is a factor in criminal behavior.

Third, liberation means freedom from hate, resentment, violence, and anger toward authority, things that seem to accompany a criminal life style. “It is freedom from peer pressure within the system to break rules and regulations and participate in gang activity, and freedom from drug and alcohol abuse and addiction, which imprison people far beyond physical confinement” (Pounder, 2008, p. 282).

Fourth, it means freedom from the “punish and keep on punishing” mentality that many of our nation’s electorate, legislators and court systems advocate today (Pounder, p.
282). During the many years I have been in prison ministry, I often heard this popular refrain expressed by our society, “They did this to themselves. They hurt others, and now it is time to be accountable for their actions and pay the price.”

Finally, liberation means freedom from abiding rejection. It is very common to find people in prison rejected by the rest of society, continually rejected by family and friends, the parole board, and even the church. How eager they are to learn that liberation is to know that Jesus, who suffered and died for all, does not reject them. The freedom of God’s transformative power by becoming a prisoner of Christ, as the apostle Paul stated, represents one of the greatest paradoxes of Christianity (Eph 3.1; 4.1; 2 Tim 1.8; and Phlm 1.9).

A Christian educator working in prison, Barbera, observes freedom in knowing guilt: “A person in prison who becomes accountable for their actions is no longer in bondage to their crimes. Becoming released from the bondage to a crime or past negative behavior frees the soul of punishment. A free soul is rehabilitated” (2007, p. 129). This is similar to Hall’s reflection, “Christians are bound by a tradition whose goal, if we allow it, is to set us free” (Hall, 2005, p. 22). As a result, I may stress that for the prisoners in Christ, personal freedom no longer happens on the day of their release from prison, but it is a present experience.

Therefore, inmates transformed by the love of God are free and able to help other inmates in their own pains and struggles, forming and leading disciples within the mission field of prison. “In prison culture, this translates into people relating to God not as shepherd or king, but as liberator, ‘the One who frees us,’ each and every new day” (Pounder, 2008, p. 283).
In addition to individual transformation, prison theology speaks to collective transformation, which can be applied to the local, state, or worldwide churches. A church liberated from its fears is a church not only to those outside, but also to those inside of jails and prisons.

**Hope**

In prison theology, a life of hope in our God who makes all things new is essential (Rev 21.5). “Hope, the second characteristics of prison theology, includes hope in the cross of Jesus, and God's love, forgiveness and abiding presence” (Pounder, 2008, p. 283).

*Hope of the cross:* The essential substance of prison theology is Jesus Christ and the theology of the cross. As Pounder (2008) saw, the cross means God comes to us, suffers for us, forgives us, and is with us in our brokenness, guilt, shame, loneliness, and powerlessness. The cross reveals to us God's unconditional love and his forgiveness, how we are liberated from sin and death, regardless of our circumstances. I agree with White when she wrote, “The death of Christ on the cross of Calvary is our only hope in this world, and it will be our theme in the world to come (1889).

Liberation theology is encapsulated by the story of the Exodus and Israel’s deliverance from Egyptian slavery, but the central story of freedom within bondage must be the death and resurrection of Jesus, after He was arrested, oppressed, humiliated, tried, convicted, and executed. “Jesus, the incarnate One, God in the flesh, did not come as the jailor but the jailed; and did not die as a governing official but as a criminal among criminals, in compassion and humility, taking on the sin of us all” (Pounder, 2008, p. 283).
I agree with Moltmann, as he expressed his hope at a time when the suffering people living under Communism in Eastern Europe were oppressed, persecuted, incarcerated, and without hope:

In a civilization that glorifies success and happiness and is blind to the sufferings of others, people's eyes can be opened to the truth if they remember that at the center of the Christian faith stands an unsuccessful, tormented Christ, dying in forsakenness. The recollection that God raised this crucified Christ and made him the hope of the world must lead the churches to break their alliances with the powerful and to enter into the solidarity of the humiliated. (Moltmann, 1993, p. ix)

For Moltmann, the experience of the crucified Christ helps us see the world with new eyes. “Although war, hunger, oppression and imprisonment sadly remain, the situation is no longer hopeless. Seeing the world from the cross of Christ, one can become hope for another, since God through Christ became hope for us all” (Moltmann, 1973, p. 266).

Prison theology is a theology of hope in a Stranger who walks with us when we are discouraged and hopeless (Luke 24:13-35), or when we are prodigals in a far country and waste all money and health (Luke 15:11-32), or even when we plot to kill someone (2 Sam 11:14-15). “God is the God of hope in our countless situations. Prison theology brings the hope of new life in Jesus, the Rejected One, for society's most rejected ones—lonely men and women in prison” (Pounder, 2008, p. 284).

Prison theology means hope for the most abandoned of all imprisoned people who have never received a visit or a card in the last 15 years, it means hope for the families and especially the children of the incarcerated, “the ones for whom loss of a parent to prison is not only traumatic but a shameful stigma, the ones more likely than other children to follow in the footsteps of an incarcerated parent” (Travis & Waul, 2003, p.
Prison theology means embracing these outcasts, with the love of God and hope for their lives.

*Hope in God’s love*: Because prison theology advocates God’s love, it is a very practical theology grounded in the Scripture. John 3:16-17 answer the praxis question:

> For God so loved the world, that God gave God's only begotten Son, that whoever believes in God shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him.

The words of love, without condemnation are words of healing to all, but especially those in the prison who are constantly judged from the moment of their arrest all the way to their release and beyond. A heart touched by the love of God will transform an inmate for the rest of his or her life.

Because of the cross, we discover a new way to look at people with the kind of unconditional love Jesus teaches us, “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Matt 5.44).

I have seen Christians in Communist prisons with fifty pounds of chains on their feet, tortured with red-hot iron pokers, in whose throats spoonsful of salt had been forced, being kept afterward without water, starving, whipped, suffering from cold—and praying with fervor for the Communists. This is humanly inexplicable! It is the love of Christ, which was poured out in our hearts. (Wurmbrand, 1967, p. 75)

*Hope in God’s forgiveness*: Many prisoners cannot overcome their guilt and shame; yet, God provides a second chance and rebirth through forgiveness. Because we can do nothing to earn forgiveness of sin, it is only by God's gift of grace that we become righteous through faith (Rom 3.21–24; 4.5), and that grace is not a cheap grace, but very expensive.

In Bonhoeffer’s works, as described by Pounder (2008), he defines cheap grace as acceptance of grace without the cross and the living, incarnate Jesus Christ. It means acceptance of forgiveness without turning to God, confession, and discipleship. But
costly grace, which condemns sin, is costly because it costs Jesus Christ His life for ours. It is grace because it justifies sinners and calls us to follow Jesus, the giver of new life (Bonhoeffer, 1959, pp. 35-37).

In stressing that non-prisoners are equally as unrighteous before God as prisoners, theologian Barth expresses his theology in this emotional prayer for “friends, brothers, and sisters” at Basel Prison where he volunteered:

Here we are gathered now in thy presence: in all our diversity equally unrighteous before thee and before each other, equally subject to death, equally lost without mercy, yet also equally sharing the promise and the gift of thy grace offered to all in thy dear Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. (1961, p. 60)

God's liberating forgiveness is a gift we, as Christians, are mandated to give to others. Strangely, forgiveness seems extraordinary and it surprises us when given, especially after the horrific occurs. Growing up under a cruel communist regime, I remember a story that shaped my future and my desire to motivate others for prison ministry.

In 1946 in the little village of Malusteni, Romania, a drunken constable killed my father’s cousin, the only son of that family, because the young man—a new Christian, refused to curse when he was asked to do so. As incomprehensible and tragic as that was, my father’s uncle, Jacob, in his unspeakable pain and deep sorrow, became the Gospel to the confused and heartbroken man who committed this crime. While prosecutors intended to put the criminal in jail for many years, if not for life, Jacob requested the court to forgive him and spare his wife and children from being deprived of a husband and a father. Many years later, I met that former constable in the same village. Even though he never joined a spiritual community, every day at noon he was observed on the steps of the church Jacob attended, and in a deep prostate reverence he pointed to the love
expressed to him many years ago singing aloud the only Christian song he learned and knew by heart “Iubit-a-i Doamne intreaga omenire, incat ai dat jertfa pe Fiul Tau” (For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son).

*Hope in God's abiding presence:* For inmates, life-sustaining hope can start with a visit or a letter, but hope, strength and comfort are primarily in God’s permanent presence in His Word. “O God,” Bonhoeffer cried out from his prison cell, “Help me to pray and to concentrate my thoughts on you; I cannot do this alone” (Bonhoeffer et al., 2001, p. 139).

Likewise the presence of fellow Christians brings hope for those behind bars. The beauty of prison theology is the blending of hope and love among those inside and those outside prison walls. The details offered in Heb 13:1-3 are relevant:

keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters. Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it. Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.

Furthermore, Scripture tells us not only to remember prisoners but also to become active in the process of visitation. According to Matthew 25: 36, visitation is not only a suggestion, but should be understood as a necessity. Jesus said, “I was in prison and you came to visit me” (Matt 25.36). “Jesus included along with providing food and clothing for the needy also visits to the ill. He did not separate it out. The church, however, does” (Pounder, 2008, p. 286).

It is easier to fill a food container, to donate some clothes to the thrift store, or to visit the sick or elderly than to visit those in prison. But the reward of visiting those in prison can be appreciated as a positive experience, only in the context of returning to others God’s grace bestowed upon our lives. The ultimate beneficiary, according to Matt
25:40 is Jesus Himself: “Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.”

Visits, letters, cards, and prayer by a supporting community have been called the “lifeblood’ for a person in confinement” (Bailey, 2006, p. 91). One prisoner said to a priest ministering in Rikers Island Prison in New York, “A letter is a flower in the desert. A visit is a fountain” (Raphaël, 1990, p. 7).

Justice

A third characteristic of prison theology is justice. The understanding of the term justice is influenced by the history and religion of every culture and according to Scripture, the Lord imparts, grants, loves, does, proclaims, and seeks justice, which flows like a river (Amos 5.24). “With what shall I come before the Lord?” the Old Testament people asked, assuming something very spectacular, in the form of a sacrifice or offering, was needed. But through the prophet Micah, God has shown us what is good and that the Lord requires of us “to do justice, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God” (Mic 6.6-8).

Justice in prison theology is calling Christians, the individuals and the church to use their power, influence, and choices to affirm life and support impartiality. “Too often the term ‘justice’ is used to justify punishment, ‘Justice was done today’ spoken at an execution, to put a person down, and keep him or her down. It is oppressive” (Pounder, 2008, p. 287).

Torture exists in many of our prisons today. News reports inform us of torture in war in response to terrorism and the devices of restraint used. Yet the torture of thousands in prison facilities, where human beings are isolated in small cells, and locked down 23
hours a day for months, years, decades, even for life, of this we are less informed. “We know that the effects of isolation and sensory deprivation—covered windows or no windows, and sound-proof cells—eventually lead to unpredictable and harmful changes in one’s mental condition including paranoia, anxiety, depression, aggression, and even delusion and psychosis” (Magnani, Wray, & American Friends Service Committee, Criminal Justice Task Force, 2006, p. 100).

It is obvious the high percentages of parolees returning to prison for technical violations, like missing a meeting, or a minor traffic violation. This population comprises teenagers with mandated minimum sentences of years for minor drug offenses, and an increasing number of women and mothers imprisoned for non-violent offenses, many of whom are vulnerable to sexual abuse within prison. I witnessed many situations when the inmates were given civil clothes and then released on parole, just to be re-arrested after 10 minutes in the prison parking lot and returned to the penitentiary because their parole residence was not accepted at the time of release.

God’s justice is a core value of prison theology. That justice strengthens a person’s self-esteem, helping her or him to stand. God’s justice allows prisoners to experience liberation, restoration, and the prospect of a new life filled with hope.

Summary

It is my hope that all readers will recognize that apart from the incarceration and its custodial context, prison theology begins with an understanding of the inborn worth of humankind as created by God in His own image. Aside from any dramatic story, people might see the strength of our theology: liberation, hope, and justice in Jesus Christ. The church is invited to build a bridge with the oppressed and lonely people in prison.
Moving on, may we, the living church, be the one which will frame the response to Bonhoeffer’s plea, “Brother, sister, we know you are searching. We know you are calling. We hear your voices. Here we are.”
CHAPTER 3

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

The first goal of my preliminary review of the literature was to gain knowledge and insight of the prison context from a Christian perspective. The second goal was to identify the most significant sources that shaped prison ministry during the Christian era and how it was understood by church leaders and lay people. The third objective of this chapter was to discover and analyze contemporary resources of the Seventh-day Adventist church that may provide a positive contribution to the outcomes of this study. Finally, the last goal was to briefly examine the historical development of the servant leadership and transformational leadership theories, used as vehicles for putting the theoretical project into action by practicing an educative dialogue.

A prison (from Latin *prensio*) is a place in which people are physically confined and, usually, deprived of a range of personal freedoms (Prison, 2012b). According to Schlanger (2003), imprisonment or incarceration is a legal penalty that may be imposed by the state for the commission of a crime. Other terms used are penitentiary, correctional facility, detention center, and jail. In some legal systems some of these terms have distinct meanings. In the United States the difference between jails or detention facilities and prisons is primarily a function of the length of incarceration. Jails and detention facilities, under city or county authority, typically hold offenders awaiting trial or serving
short sentences. Correctional facilities and prisons are more often run by the state or federal governments and house offenders serving long-term sentences (Schlanger, 2003).

**Brief History of the Prison System**

The prisons of the ancient world have disappeared. Those of late antiquity and medieval Europe have fallen into ruin, have been recycled into other uses, or have been preserved as museums. Like the buildings that once housed them, the sources for the early history of prisons are also vast, diverse, fragmentary, or otherwise difficult to interpret (Morris & Rothman, 1995, p. 4).

**Prison During Ancient Time**

Prison as a penalty is not a modern innovation. “A work edited by Confucius notes the building of prisons around 2000 BCE and refers to one case in which three political offenders were exiled and the fourth received strict imprisonment” (Pauthier et al., 1840, p. 50). Although public or private prisons have always existed for most of history, imprisoning has not been a punishment in itself, but rather a way to confine criminals until corporal or capital punishment was administered (Johnston, 2009, p. 1).

*Catholic Encyclopedia* (1913) offers some details for the prisons of ancient times. The Bible’s first mention of prison starts with the details of Joseph’s imprisonment in Egypt and also continues to refer to the prisons used for detention in Jerusalem in New Testament time. Dungeons were used to hold prisoners; those who were not killed or left to die there often became galley slaves or faced penal transportations. In other cases debtors were often thrown into debtor's prisons, until they paid their jailers enough money in exchange for a limited degree of freedom (Hebermann, et al., 1913).
The most concise statement concerning a rationale for the punishment of criminals in Ancient Greece is found not in the legal literature but in a remark of the philosopher Plato. In the dialogue *Gorgias*, Plato has Socrates observe:

Now the proper office of all punishment is twofold: he who is rightly punished ought either to become better and profit by it, or he ought to be made an example to his fellows, that they may see what he suffers, and fear to suffer the like, and become better. Those who are improved when they are punished by gods and men, are those whose sins are curable. But they who have been guilty of the worst crime, and are incurable by reason of their crimes, are made examples. They get no good themselves, but others get good when they behold them enduring forever the most terrible and painful and fearful sufferings as the penalty of their sins, hanging up in the prison-house of the world below just as examples, a spectacle and warning to all unrighteous men who come thither. (Plato, Jowett, & Harward, 1952, p. 525)

Prison During Roman Empire

According to Morris and Rothman (1995), a very important contribution of the prison system through history was offered by the law and regulation issued during the Roman Empire. In 451 BC the Twelve Tables, the first written law of the Rome, were issued and the only instance of imprisonment in this Roman Code occurs in the law concerning debt (p. 15). Likewise, the later Justinian’s *Code* and the *Digest* offer a number of ideas concerning imprisonment.

The contribution of Rome to the history of criminal law and prisons was the jurisprudence of the *Code* and the *Digest* and the moving narratives of the Christian martyrs. . . Justinian’s *Code* and *Digest* did not find a ready home in Western Europe until the twelfth century. (p. 21)

Among the Roman jurists whose work on criminal law does survive, the most influential of all was Ulpian, whose death in 222/224 conventionally marks the end of the classical period of Roman law:

Governors are in the habit of condemning men to be kept in prison or in chains, but they ought not to do this, for punishments of this type are forbidden. Prison indeed ought to be employed for confining men, not for punishing them. (Gaius et al., 1932, p. 50)
Prison During Medieval World

In their book, Morris and Rothman (1995) offered detailed information in regard to this particular historical era. From the late fifth century on, imperial rule in Western European provinces of the Roman Empire waned because of the migration of Germanic and other people. This instability resulted in a collapse of the administrative, political and financial state institutions including the administration of laws. “During this time, prisons are occasionally mentioned among few punishments indicated in Germanic laws, but very rarely” (p. 23).

Also, when the Roman Empire started to legitimize Christianity, legal privileges were offered to the leaders of Christian Communities and this fact created a hierarchy of authority among Christians. The emperors recognized the spiritual authority of bishops in not only maintaining discipline in religious affairs, but also in many civil affairs.

The disciplinary aspects of canon law were based on the bishop’s responsibilities for the salvation of those he ruled by the proper application of discipline and correction. The development of canon law in the cases of monks, secular clergy, and lay people was the earliest articulation of in institutionalized disciplinary system. In this process the prison emerged with an entirely new function. (Morris & Rothman, 1995, p. 27)

One of the best-known examples of the clerical discipline of the laity was the establishment and work of the inquisitorial tribunals recognized in the early thirteenth century to deal predominantly with cases of heresy and nonconformity with the official view of the church. Because the investigations were time consuming and the results not available overnight, inquisitors used prison to hold those accused until the investigation was complete” (Morris & Rothman, 1995, p. 31).
Prison During Early Modern Europe

Starting with the 13th century, the numbers of prisons and impressionable offenses increased rapidly in England. By 1520 there were 180 impressionable offenses in the common law. Punishment was intended to be quick and public to serve as a deterrent to other crime (Morris & Rothman, 1995, p. 34).

According to Randa (1997), the number of capital crimes in Britain continued to rise throughout the next two centuries. By the 1700s, 222 crimes were punishable by death in Britain. These included stealing, cutting down a tree, and robbing a rabbit warren. Because of the severity of the punishment of death, many juries would not convict defendants if the offense was not serious. This led to reforms of Britain's death penalty. From 1823 to 1837, the death penalty was eliminated for over 100 of the 222 crimes punishable by the death penalty (p. 3).

In the 1770s, Britain practiced transportation of convicted criminals to British penal colonies in America as well as Australia from 1788 to 1868. France sent their criminals to tropical penal colonies in Louisiana from the early 18th century (Taylor, 2001). Penal colonies in French Guiana operated until 1951, including the infamous Île du Diable (Devil's Island). Katorga prisons were established in the 17th century in Tsardom of Russia in under populated areas of Siberia and the Russian Far East that had few towns or food sources. Since then, Siberia has gained its fearful connotation of punishment (Prison, 2012a).

Prison Reform in United States

In 1787, Dr. Benjamin Rush, a Quaker and signatory to the Declaration of Independence, helped form the Philadelphia Society for Alleviating the Miseries of
Public Prisons, whose members included Benjamin Franklin. Rush proposed a radical idea: to build a true penitentiary—a prison designed to foster remorse and penitence in a criminal’s heart. In 1921, after many years of lobbying by the Society, the Pennsylvania legislature approved funding to build the Eastern State penitentiary, to hold 250 inmates (Beane, 2012, p. 1891).

It would be a natural assumption to think that the modern prison would be the fruit of the movement that highlighted “man's ability to reform his soul” after late 18th century. Geltner in his work, *The medieval prison: A social history* (2008), challenges this view by tracing the institution's emergence to a much earlier period beginning in the late 13th century, and in doing so provides a unique view of medieval prison life.

Geltner (2008) carefully reconstructs life inside the walls of prisons in medieval Venice, Florence, Bologna, and elsewhere in Europe. He argues that many enduring features of the modern prison—including administration, finance, and the classification of inmates—were already developed by the end of the 14th century, and that incarceration as a formal punishment was far more widespread in this period than is often realized. Geltner likewise shows that inmates in medieval prisons, unlike their modern counterparts, enjoyed frequent contact with society at large. The prison typically stood in the heart of the medieval city, and inmates were not locked away but, rather, subjected to a more coercive version of ordinary life.

**Contemporary U.S. Incarceration System**

Over the last 35 years, the population of America’s prisons and jails has increased from approximately 360,000 to over 2.2 million people. More than one in 100 American adults is currently behind bars. Correctional facilities across the country are chronically
overcrowded and short-staffed, with prisoners jammed into dormitories or doubled up in tiny cells designed for a single person, under conditions that increase instability and the risk of violence while decreasing the amount of control prison officials have over the institution (U.S. Department of Justice, 2010).

In this context prison ministry will not only be a Christian act of grace and love, but a civic responsibility for our society, our country and our world.

**Ministering in a Prison Context**

Ministry to prisoners it is not new for Christianity and it has a rich history of two millennia. Whether it was a group of disciples keeping John the Baptist updated with news from outside of his prison or Paul and Silas singing songs to the inmates and witnessing to the jailer of their detention facility, prison ministry has been around since biblical times. Prison ministry is a large concept, and today includes the support of the spiritual and religious needs not only of inmates, but prison guards and staff, too. This is comparable to the care that is extended to the military.

In this section, I will review the history of prison ministry during the Christian era, starting from the Early Church and continuing through four more stages until our Modern Church era. The rich history of prison ministry teaches us that prison ministry was always interconnected with the Christian Church.

**Early Church Prison Ministry**

“Before Jesus commissioned all of His disciples to make disciples of all nations he commissioned a number of John the Baptist’s followers to carry on a prison ministry to their teacher” (Balge, 1988, p. 1). They were assigned the task of answering the question posed by John who was in prison, whether Jesus was the Promised One or
whether they should expect someone else. With the commission, also went a message that comprised one of Jesus’ incarnation, and freedom for the prisoners (p. 2). Luke was able to identify the essence of the prophet Isaiah, by quoting the words of Jesus in Luke 7:22-23:

Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me.

Acts 16:25 records a prison ministry carried on by prisoners: “About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them.” That event in Philippi marked the first, but not last, occasion a prison official was converted by the gospel preached in prison as recorded in verse 33: “He and all his family were baptized. . . . He was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God—he and his whole family” (Balge, 1988, p. 1).

“Keep on loving each other as brothers. . . . Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners,” wrote the inspired author of Hebrews (13:13). How have believers done this through the first centuries of Christian Church? The anti-Christian Lucian wrote of them in the 2nd century: “Their first legislator has persuaded them that they are all each other’s brothers” (Lucian, as cited by Balge, 1998, p. 1).

Believers of that age were subject to imprisonment. Those who were not imprisoned remembered those who were. When it was possible they visited them. They brought food, comforted them with God’s Word, prayed with them. Sometimes it was possible to celebrate the Lord’s Supper with prisoners (Balge, 1988, p. 1).
According with Shultz (1966), on the evening of March 6, A.D. 203, at a prison in Carthage, the martyrs of the next day, Perpetua, Felicitas, and their companions, were given a free meal by the authorities.

This meal they converted as far as possible into an Agape [love-feast]. Holy Communion was the first consideration of the Christian and the Church in times of persecution and imprisonment. To the early Christians, Holy Communion was more precious than their lives. Holy Communion was their ultimate concern because their hope of eternal life was in remembrance of Him who loved them and gave Himself for them. (Shultz, 1966, p. 173)

Actual incarceration was usually of relatively brief duration, but there was no constitutional guarantee of a speedy trial. Once a trial had been held, the condemned were put to death, remanded to be sold as slaves, condemned to a term in the mines or sent into exile. There was, in theory, no long-term confinement. (Nero Persecutes the Christians, 64 A.D., www.eyewitnesshistory.com 2000).

*The Apostolic Constitutions*, accumulated and amended through three centuries (3rd to 5th), contained instructions for all Christians on what “remembering those in bonds” should mean. This “product” of the Church fathers, decreed in 313 AD, refers to believers in prison because of their faith. Book V, Section 1 reads:

If any Christian, on account of the name of Christ, and love and faith towards God, be condemned by the ungodly to the games, to the beasts, or to the mines, do not ye overlook him; but send to him from your labor and your very sweat for his sustenance, and for a reward to the soldiers, that he may be eased and taken care of; that, as far as lies in your power, your blessed brother may not be afflicted. Do you, all ye of the faithful, by your bishop, minister to the saints of your substance and of your labor? But if anyone has not, let him fast a day, and set apart that, and order it for the saints. But if anyone has superfluities, let him minister more to them according to the proportion of his ability. But if he can possibly sell all his living, and redeem them out of prison, he will be blessed, and a friend of Christ. And if these be such as to be attested to by Christ before his Father, you ought not to be ashamed to go to them in prison. (as cited in Balge, 1988, p. 2)

Furthermore, Balge (1988) revels something more about the prison system of that time. In order to offer meals to the prisoners, nourishing food came from the outside.
“Guards could be ‘rewarded’ for giving decent treatment to prisoners. Prisoners could be
‘redeemed’ at a considerable price. The actual transactions seem to have been discharged
by the bishops, although visits by individuals were also permitted” (Balge, 1988, p. 3).

Throughout the history of the Church, much of its literature, including Luther’s
writings, seems to focus on Matthew 25:31-46 which references the poor, sick and
oppressed, while ignoring suggestions to visiting those in prison.

Other charitable works are often treated in some detail, but prison visits are not. Was
it because prison visits were not often possible? Was it that this was the work of
clerical specialists, not the business of the laity? Does the silence necessarily mean
that those in prison were being neglected? None of these questions can be answered
definitely in the affirmative. But the omission of reference to the prison visits in so
many treatments of Matthew 25 is marked. (Balge, 1988, p. 2)

When the literature of the first three centuries speaks of prisoners, it is speaking
of people imprisoned simply because they were Christians.

In the view of the Roman authorities that meant they were guilty of all the crimes of
which Christians were accused: atheism, treason, cannibalism, infanticide and
homosexual incest. It took real courage to identify oneself with such people by
visiting them or even writing to them. (Balge, 1988, p. 3)

Tertullian (150-222 AD) wrote in Scorpiace, Chapter XI: “When (Jesus) wishes a
brother to be visited in prison, he is commanding that those about to confess be the object

The first systematic and concerted empire-wide persecution of Christians took
place under Decius and Gallienus during the years 249 AD to 260 AD. In one of several
surviving letters, Bishop Cyprian of Carthage (200-258 AD) wrote to the presbyters and
deacons about “furnishing supplies to those who have confessed the Lord with words of
joy and who are now to be found in prison” (Cyprian & Clarke, 1984, p. 43). The letter
also contained a practical guide for those considering visiting prisons, for instance, not to
go in too great numbers and not to let any one person go too often.
Some of the Christians imprisoned at Carthage starved to death in the year 250 AD (McKinney, 2008). We are not sure whether that happened before or after Cyprian began urging his people to care for those who were suffering for the faith. Like most pastors throughout time, he found it necessary to repeat his instruction in Letter 12:

I am well aware, my dearest brothers, that I have repeatedly urged you in my letters to pay every care and attention to those who have confessed the Lord with words of glory and who are now to be found in prison. Nevertheless, I enjoin you again and again not to be wanting in any way in caring for those whose glory is itself not in any way wanting. (Balge, 1988, p. 4)

According to Balge (1988), Cyprian requested the churches of Carthage to raise funds to redeem Christian captives who had been sent to the mines in Numidia not too long before his own martyrdom. They gathered 100,000 sesterces (ancient Roman coins). Cyprian used the funds to redeem some captives and to relieve the lot of others. Letter 77 is addressed to him by the presbyters and deacons in Numidia:

Those condemned with us give the greatest thanks to you before God, dearly beloved Cyprian, because you have refreshed struggling hearts by your letters; you have cured members wounded by cudgels; you have released feet bound with chains; you have smoothed the hair of half-shaved heads; you have illuminated the darkness of the prison; you have brought the mountains of the mine down to the plains; you have even brought fragrant flowers to noses and have dissipated the foul odor of smoke. (as cited in Balge, 1988, p. 2)

Gregory Thaumaturgus (269 AD) recommended that “those who collected rewards by turning in captives who had escaped, be barred from attending the services even as hearers until it was determined what discipline to impose on them” (Balge, 1988, p. 3).

The next great wave of persecution began under Diocletian and his co-rulers in 303 AD. There are not many stories of heroism from that time. However, visiting the saints in prison brought persecution to Saints Anastasia and Natalie (Balge, 1988, p. 4).
Regardless of the persecution and barriers people faced during this harsh period, I can clearly see that there was a prison ministry and members were doing their best in the given context. Prison ministry concerned not only the body, but also the soul. It was proved to be a considerable risk and sacrifice on the part of those who were involved in this ministry. Leaders had to repeatedly urge the people to remember those in prison. “It was a ministry of the Church. However, there must have been occasions when, as with Paul and Silas at Philippi, Christian testimony reached the ears and hearts of prison officers and pagan prisoners” (Balge, 1988, p. 4).

Prison Ministry During Late Antiquity

On June 13, 313 at Milan, the Emperors Constantine and Licinius issued a joint proclamation. It declared “that no one whatever should be denied the opportunity to give his heart to the observance of the Christian religion, or of that religion which he should think best for himself” and “that each one may have the free opportunity to worship as he pleases” (Roberts et al., 2004, p. 320).

That meant that, officially the persecution would cease against Christians and they would no longer be imprisoned because of their faith, but it did not necessarily mean that there were no longer any Christians in prison. “Even after the Church was formally established as the religion of the Empire in 381 AD, and all citizens were by definition Christians, the Church still needed a prison ministry” (Balge, 1988, p. 4).

Succeeding emperors from Constantine onward legislated that the humane treatment of prisoners should be under the supervision of the bishops. Honorius, who reigned in the West from 395 AD to 425 AD, ordered that prisoners be gathered before the bishops every Sunday so that they could report on their treatment. (http://www.fourthcentury.com/imperial-laws-chart-395/)
In 529 AD, Emperor Justinian signed a law, which appointed the heads of the church to visit prisoners every Wednesday and Friday. They were assigned two tasks for this prison ministry: pastoral counsel and listening to the inmates’ complaints and desires. Following this custom, a church council at Orleans in 549 AD required the archdeacon of a diocese to see all prisoners every Sunday (Balge, 1988, p. 5).

The purpose of prisons continued to be what it had been under the pagan Empire.

The Digest of the Corpus Iuris Civilis stated:

A prison is for confinement, not for punishment. The guilty were still put to death, inflicted with corporal punishment, sent to the mines or exiled. Sometimes exile, particularly in the case of aristocratic political prisoners, consisted simply of banishment to a monastery. There was, or ought to have been, a built-in prison ministry there. Members of the imperial family, including the women, took the lead as the principal Christians of the Empire in visiting prisoners. (Balge, 1988, p. 4)

John Chrysostom (347-407), patriarch of Constantinople, wrote in his Baptismal Instructions, under the heading “Do All for the Glory of God”:

If you ever wish to associate with someone make sure that you do not give your attention to those who enjoy health and wealth and fame as the world sees it, but take care of those in affliction, those in critical circumstances, those in prison. Put a high value on associating with these. (Chrysostom & Harkins, 1963, p. 96)

A very interesting perspective is offered by Saint John Chrysostom and Thomas Aquinas (1957) in regard to the universality of the Gospel in the prison context:

There are probably many upright and estimable men in prison, even if they are not recognized by all. The service you do to such as these gives you a return for your solicitude on behalf of all the rest. But, even if there be no one of this kind, even in this case you will have generous repayment. Is there a murderer living in the prison? Let us not, despite this be fainthearted in doing him good. Is there a grave robber or an adulterer? Still, let us take pity, not on their evil doing, but on their misfortune. As long as you did it for one of these, the least of my brethren,’ Jesus said, ‘you did it for me.’ Well, then, since we are aware of the treasure that lies available in prison, let us visit there continually; let us busy ourselves there; and let us turn in that direction our enthusiasm for the theater. Even though you have nothing to bring there, bring the good cheer of your words. God rewards not only him who feeds the hungry but him also who visits those in prison. Indeed, when you go in and hearten the trembling and fearful soul, by offering encouragement, lending assistance,
promising to defend, causing it to seek after true wisdom, you will receive no small reward for this, also. (Chrysostom & Goggin, 1957, Homily 60)

Continuing this conviction for prison ministry, Palladius (ca. 415 AD), a spirited contemporary of Chrysostom, praised a number of followers who offered themselves and their resources to the material comfort of prisoners. Likewise, a very interesting fact about an anonymous monk is cited by Palladius, who “preferred not to be ordained to the priesthood.” He “went about at night and had mercy on the needy. He neglected neither the prison nor the hospital. . . . To some he gave words of good cheer. . . . Some he encouraged, others he reconciled, to some he gave bodily necessities” (Palladius & Meyer, 1965, p. 34).

Prison Ministry During the Middle Ages

As many conditions did not change deeply, the same attitude in regards to prisoners of the Empire Church continued into the Middle Ages. “Prisons continued to be temporary places of detention before trial rather than places of long-term punishment. The guilty were executed, mutilated, flogged, branded, fined (after the 8th century), or enslaved” (Balge, 1988, p. 6).

The guiding work considered the standard pastoral theology during the Middle Ages was the Liber Curae Pastoralis of Pope Gregory the Great (590-604). It is interesting that the book does not contain specific treatment of prison ministry. However, since we have enough evidences that prison ministry was active in that period, it seems more likely that ministry to sinners in prison was in essence the same as ministry to sinners in the general population. It is safe to assume that during the Middle Ages there were representative of every level of the church bishops, priests and lay people who cared and acted (Balge, 1988, p. 6).
Prison Ministry During Reformation and Counter-Reformation

Just before the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, it was observed that prison populations increased. In Germany, besides the local pastors who were active in visiting the inmates, church members started to participate in this ministry, in particular visiting those who were condemned to death. Later, special ministries were established by the various German states to serve the imprisoned population. “The pastoral care of those held on suspicion or awaiting trial was the responsibility of local pastors. The involvement of lay Christians under certain circumstances and with the clergy’s approval was also provided for in some of the church orders” (Balge, 1988, p. 6).

According to Balge (1988), two martyrs of the English Reformation involved themselves in a voluntary ministry to prisoners during the years when they were first learning Luther’s doctrine. Thomas Bilney, burned under Henry VIII in 1531, and Hugh Latimer, burned under Bloody Mary in 1555, “went together and exhorted them as well as we were able” (Balge, 1988, p. 6). Latimer also counseled prisoners at Newgate Prison. In 1549 he appealed to King Edward “that such men as shall be put to death may have learned men to give them instruction and exhortations” (McNeill, 1951, p. 112).

As Christian leaders before him, Calvin perceived the necessity for prisons. Like them, he enlisted legislation intended to provide for the spiritual care of prisoners. In the Draft Ecclesiastical Ordinances of Autumn 1541, he wrote:

It will be good that their Lordships ordain a certain day each week on which admonition be given to prisoners, to reprove and exhort them; and if it seem good to them, let them depute someone of their company in order that no fraud be committed. If they have anyone in irons, whom it is not desirable to take out, if it seems good to them, they could give entry to some minister to console him in their presence as above. For if one waits until they are about to die, they are often so preoccupied with fear of death that they can neither receive nor listen. The day for doing this, it is decided, will be Saturday after dinner. (Calvin & Reid, 1954, p. 68)
One notable representative impacting this period was Charles Borrome (1538-1584), the archbishop of Milan, who demonstrated a wholehearted practical concern for inmates during and after their imprisonment. Another was France Vincent de Paul (1576-1660), a nobleman who remembered the time he was a galley slave, “who structured the Order of Lazarists and the Sisters of Mercy to do what would today be called Christian social work. He and his orders took a special interest in prisoners, particularly galley slaves” (Balge, 1988, p. 7).

A slow transition started to happen as prisons were now viewed more as places of punishment rather than its traditional view. Now debtor’s prisons incarcerated not only the responsible person, but their entire family as well. Inadvertently the number of inmates increased, while the interest of the church to provide spiritual care decreased. While it was customary for a minister to spend some time with sentenced prisoners on the day of execution, the regular visitation, and religious service were few. In this context the pattern for prison ministry came from individual volunteers and civic associations (Balge, 1988, p. 7).

Prison Ministry During Enlightenment and Revivalism

According to Burton (1908), also cited by Balge (1988), the Anglican Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge included prison ministry among its many worthy deeds almost from the time of its founding in 1699 (Burton, 1908).

The most important individual to be included in an honor roll of individuals promoting prison ministry is Philip Doddridge (1702-1751). The author of six hymns in *The Lutheran Hymnal*, he was a Congregationalist pastor in Northampton, England. He trained his elders for spiritual service to prisoners (Stanford & Doddridge, 1881, p. 95).
John Wesley (1703-1791) and his Methodist followers visited prisoners regularly, especially those who were under sentence of death (Maddox, 1996, p. 186).

Methodist businessman John Howard’s report to Parliament on prison conditions (1774) and his book, *The State of Prisons in England and Wales* (1777), moved Parliament to vote funds for two “penitentiary houses” to rehabilitate prisoners by, among other things, religious instruction (Howard & du Perray, 1792, p. 186).

At about this time, the idea of rehabilitation of imprisoned criminal took root. The prison was to be a place of repentance, with government-appointed chaplains and with a Bible in every cell. This concept made its way to the New World in the early 19th century, with New York and Pennsylvania leading the way in establishing penitentiaries. (Balge, 1988, p. 7)

Another notable advocate for practicing prison ministry was Francis Asbury (1745-1816), who was a very active Methodist missionary, ministering to prisoners whenever he had the opportunity. While he attended some executions, on several occasions he used the opportunity to preach to the crowds gathered for the hanging. His *Journal* includes several accounts similar to this: “The poor criminal appeared penitent, behaved with great solidity, and expressed a desire to leave the world” (Asbury, 1852, 1:35). Then in the same book, Chapter 18, we find another quote: “I returned to Philadelphia, where there were five criminals hanged; one of them was converted.” Many of Asbury’s preachers, as good followers of Wesley and disciples of Jesus Christ, did continue to visit those in prison (Balge, 1988, p. 7).

The Quaker Elizabeth Fry (1780-1845) was a great figure providing support for women and children. “She read the Scriptures to them, prayed with them and taught the women to sew. This work is memorialized in a famous painting. In 1819 she organized committees of Quaker women in order to enlarge and extend the work” (Balge, 1988, p.
Elizabeth Fry promoted the principle “Charity to the soul is the soul of charity” (American Sunday-School Union., 1851, p. 109).

Prison Ministry During Modern Church History

According to Latourette in his book, *Christianity in a Revolutionary Age, vol. II* (1958), another German evangelical who merits mention is Johann Hinrich Wichern (1809-1881). He founded the *Innere Mission* at Hamburg, which is a special ministry to share God’s love with prison populations. This was a part of prison reform initiated by Kaiser Friederich Wilhelm IV of Prussia (Latourette, 1958, p. 103).

Schroeder’s 1981 book, *Other sheep*, which briefly sketches the beginnings of hospital and prison ministry by the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod located in Milwaukee, offered a modern view of prison ministry:

“There is nothing that the least of Christ’s brothers and sisters need as much as they need this. No one else can offer the Good News in the unqualified and unmixed form in which we know it. God give us the love and will and energy to do it. (as cited in Balge, 1988, p. 8)

Without doubt, the most influential movement in our modern time was the great preacher and evangelist Billy Graham’s prison ministry. In the early 1970s, the evangelistic crusades promoted by Billy Graham entered U.S. prisons after Graham persuaded one of his friends and a professional football player, Bill Glass, to take up a new career as an evangelist (Beane, 2012, p. 1893).

Of course beside Billy Graham, another contemporary figure is Charles Colson. He was a member of the Nixon administration who served a prison term. While in prison he experienced conversion to Christianity. In 1983, Colson founded Prison Fellowship/Justice Fellowship Ministries and Community Care Committees, using his influence in
conservative political circles to push for bipartisan, legislative reforms in the U.S. criminal justice system (Balge, 1988, p. 8).

Prison Fellowship, today is "the nation's largest outreach to prisoners, ex-prisoners, and their families" (Colson, 1977, p. 30).

Colson worked to promote prisoner rehabilitation and reform of the prison system in the United States, citing his disdain for what he called the “lock ‘em and leave ‘em” warehousing approach to criminal. He helped to create prisons whose populations come from inmates who choose to participate in faith-based programs. . . . The ministry depends to a considerable extent on volunteers, including lay volunteers, from the communities that lie near prison facilities. (Charles Colson, Wikipedia)

The benefit we gain from church history and from a historical survey of the prison ministry in Christianity presents a model set by our predecessors and reflects their passion not only for the Lord Himself, but for those in need, afflicted and oppressed. As we witness those who gave themselves and all they had to others, we may be motivated to follow in their steps, not by history, but by the love of God decanted in our hearts.

Church history does not establish doctrine, nor govern our practice. The Bible and evangelical good sense alone can do that. “Church history also helps us evaluate our attitudes and actions. It especially helps us appreciate that the Gospel is God’s only power for saving sinners, those in prison and those outside” (Balge, 1988, p. 9).

The Impact of Prison Ministry in Adventism

The primary purpose of this study among the church members with whom I worked was to research how prison ministry impacted Adventism and what the historical approach of the church leaders and administration was toward this ministry. I considered it important to look for specific resources and strategies that may change the traditional unpopular view of jail and prison ministry. Also, I was interested to see how Ellen White related her ministry, if indeed she did, with prison ministry.
Denominational Resources for Prison Ministry

Traditionally the Seventh-day Adventist church addresses many issues; it is not silent where people are oppressed and treated unfairly. Nevertheless, after searching the different levels of church organization, I was surprised to find a limited number of resources and a diminished interest of the Seventh-day Adventist church in prison ministry even though jail and prison ministry have strong biblical support.

A point worthy of mention is: while prison ministry is an active ministry for the students on many university campuses at the present time, the Adventist seminary or any other Adventist university in North America does not have any formal program of instruction or curriculum for students wanting to pursue studies toward a prison ministry career.

Using the Center for Adventist Research in the James White Library at Andrews University and the Adventist denominational online database, I found a limited number of resources available for prison ministry. The Church manual (2010) does not have an entry in its General Index section with suggestions or instructions regarding jail and/or prison ministry. No link is made to any church interest, department, or activity. Neither does the General Conference have a department relating to nor including jail and prison ministry.

The Seventh-day Adventist church yearbook (General Conference of SDA, 2012) revealed a total of 15 entries related to jail and prison ministry: six entries are from outside the North American Division (NAD) and cover the office of one division, two unions, and two missions while nine entries are found inside the NAD, and comprise one division office, one union office, and eight conference offices. Geographically, these nine entries belonging to the NAD territories are theoretically serving approximately 2000
federal, state, and private prison facilities, 3000 county jails, and a total inmate population of almost 2.5 million people (U.S. Department of Justice, 2010).

One of the nine entities inside the NAD, the Prison Ministry Department, functions under the Adult Ministry Department of the NAD. On June 1, 2005, the North American Division Adventist Prison Volunteer Network was established by the vote of the North American Division Committee. One month later, on July 1, 2005, this new department started to publish a monthly electronic newsletter, *Network news: Communique of the North American Division Adventist prison volunteer network*. After 18 months, the newsletter changed its name to *Network news: Communique of the North American Division adult ministry network*. It was made less functional, featuring few paragraphs directly related to prison ministry. I did not receive any feedback when I expressed my desire to be part of this network of volunteers in response to an invitation by the NAD Adult Ministry Director to submit my personal information in January 2009.

In addition to the denominational structure, it is remarkable to see the role and influence of the independent prison ministries managed and staffed by Adventist lay people. There are but a hand full of such ministries, namely: Florida Prison Ministry, Someone Cares Prison Ministry in Indiana, United Prison Ministry International in Alabama, and Vision of Hope Prison Ministry in Indiana.

An unknown number of members of local Adventist churches from the NAD developed local prison ministries according to their own vision and using the limited information to which they had access. Much of the time these lay leaders may not have the support of the local church or conference for doing what they do, and in many cases they have worked for years or decades without anyone noticing and with no help nor a
word of encouragement (personal notes from prison seminars I taught at camp meetings or similar events).

Primary resources for prison ministry can be obtained from contacting the Adventist independent ministries and/or from non-denominational ministries that have built an extensive database of helpful tools. The main denominational training resource for prison ministry is offered by AdventSource, an online database making available several books about curriculum, a quick start guide, and key information about prison ministry, and interestingly, a book offering the unique perspective of women in prison. Another resource, the North American Division Prison Ministry website, offered a 111-page training manual for prison ministry. Unfortunately the website has not been updated since 2006 and most resource links are not functioning.

One of the largest online databases compiling national, international, and interdenominational organizations working with prison ministry is the International Network of Prison Ministries, located in Chicago, Illinois. As of May 31, 2012 the total number of organizations registered on this database numbered 4,457, of which 19 were Seventh-day Adventist prison ministry organizations. Out of 19, 12 were geographically located in U.S. while the other seven were outside the NAD. Out of 12 located in the U.S., only two are up to date, while the remaining ones were last updated in 2005.

Ellen White’s Encounter With Prison Ministry

Despite writing extensively on a very large variety of topics, Ellen White made no special statements concerning the prison ministry involvement and church responsibilities for serving this segment of our society residing in jail and prisons.
It is interesting to observe that in her writings, White uses broad comments about many Bible passages dealing with jail, prison, and prisoners in different circumstances. The list of her favorite characters includes people like Joseph, John the Baptist, Apostle Paul, and their time in prison. Also among her most cherished Bible passages used frequently in her writings are those from Matthew 25 and Isaiah 42, core passages for inspiring and founding prison ministries in the past and the present. Every time she referred to prison or prisoners, White moved from the physical context to a theological context of the great liberation we received from the dark prison of sin through the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, searching White’s widespread database, I found two statements that specifically refer to a prison context rather than broadly commenting on the biblical passages referred to earlier.

On one of White’s trips to Europe, she visited the Marsh family while in Holloway. Sister Marsh had been keeping the Sabbath for a number of years. Her husband was the warden of a prison in the suburb of London, and the family lived next door to the large, unfriendly building. “It looked sad, indeed,” Mrs. White remarked with feeling, “to see the large number of prisoners taking their half-hour exercise within the gloowering prison walls, guarded at every step with officers” (White, 1887, p. 141).

The second was while she visited Salem, Oregon, in June 1878. She shared her impressions after she had visited a prison as a guest speaker:

I had expected to see a set of repulsive looking men, but was happily disappointed; many of them seemed to be intelligent, and some to be men of ability. They were dressed in the coarse but neat prison uniform, their hair smooth, and their boots brushed. As I looked upon the varied physiognomies before me, I thought, ‘To each of these men have been committed peculiar gifts, or talents, to be used for the glory of God and the benefit of the world.’ I spoke from the words of John: ‘Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not. Beloved, now
are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is (1 John 3:1).’ I exalted before them the infinite sacrifice made by the Father in giving His beloved Son for fallen men, that they might through obedience be transformed, and become the acknowledged sons of God. (White, 1878, p. 5)

**Leading Prison Outreach**

It takes a skillful leader to positively implement a new program, particularly in a church setting. It is important for any type of new ministry, prison ministry included, not to compete with other church interests or to create conflicts of interest that may drain the already limited energies inside religious bodies. There is no single best way to lead. And there are a wide variety of leadership models that may be helpful to implement a jail and prison ministry in a local church. Therefore, if possible, depending on the people involved, the pastor and local church leaders need to be involved partially or fully in the process of leadership development for the new project.

The systematic approach to leadership development has proved successful for many projects, that is, by working toward a set of desired outcomes through a broad range of approaches to assume leadership. According to my personal understanding of leadership theories, development and implementation of jail and prison ministry takes into account two types of leadership, namely, transformational and servant leadership, which create a system that allows a newly shaped ministry to function at peak efficiency.

Although we see differences in the focus on the leader through transformational leadership theory and servant leadership theory, the combination of the two may complement each other with positive results for the jail and prison ministry. Both models incorporate characteristics such as respect, vision, influence, modeling, trust, integrity, and delegation (Stone, Russell, & Patterson, 2004).
The purpose of this section was to define my distinct leadership role in the implementation process. I also found it important to show how I understood the bridge between these two leadership theories, which may stimulate a culture able to impact faith-based volunteers to transmit the characteristics of servant-leadership to state prison and county jail inmates. While substantial research findings on servant-leadership exist, a shortage of prison ministry research related to servant-leadership also exists.

In the last part of this chapter I briefly survey the historical development of transformational leadership theory, tracing its development, reviewing the historical perspective of Robert Greenleaf’s servant-leadership concept, and including an inventory of ten characteristics of servant-leadership.

**Transformational Leadership**

“Historically, leaders and scholars have used a diversity of methods to recognize and understand effective leadership” (Keena, 2006, p. 11). In that respect, most researchers evaluate leadership efficiency in terms of the outcome of the leader’s actions (Yukl, 2002, p. 5).

According to Judge and Piccolo (2004), more studies have been conducted on transformational leadership compared to the sum total of all other leadership theories because the research on transformational leadership popularity is well recognized in leadership literature (Judge & Piccolo, 2004, pp. 755-768).

According to Bass and Stogdill (1990), a diverse examination needs to be undertaken in order to ensure an effective evaluation of leadership competence. He stated that transformational leadership occurs when leaders broaden and elevate the interests of their employees, when they generate awareness and acceptance of the purposes and
mission of the group, and when they stir their employees to look beyond their self-interest for the good of the group. (p. 21)

Key assumptions of this theory are that people are motivated when they are aware of the importance of the task; hence, the teams will be more productive. The moral aspects of this theory embraces: the moral character of the leader, the ethical values rooted in the leader’s vision, the morality of the processes of social ethical choices, and the action the leaders and followers engage in and collectively pursue (Bass & Steidlmeyer, 1999).

According to Burns and Reeves (1978), authors of a best-selling book on political leadership, their basic premise is that “transforming leadership appeals to the moral values of followers in an attempt to raise their consciousness about ethical issues and to mobilize their energy and resources to reform institutions” (as cited in Yukl, 2002, p. 241).

The most recent version of transformational leadership theory includes four dimensions:

1. Idealized influence or charisma—where the leader displays conviction, takes a stand, and appeals to followers on an emotional level
2. Inspirational motivation—where the leader casts a vision that appeals to and inspires followers
3. Intellectual stimulation—where the leader challenges assumptions, takes risks, and invites followers’ feedback and ideas
4. Individualized consideration—where the leader listens to followers’ anxieties and needs and acts as a mentor or coach (Judge & Piccolo, 2004, p. 755).
It seems that transformational leadership is based on some moral foundation. Both the leader and those he leads have to identify a certain set of ideals and values. The people will be transformed and changed not as the result of a give-and-take transactional relationship, but because they esteem the leader’s values projected and reflected in his life and his vision which they share with him and which motivate them to get involved in their common cause.

According to Keena (2006), transformational leadership is not without its critics. Behling and McFillen (1996) suggest that a clear model for transformational leadership does not exist. Another critique is Rost (1991), who maintains that transformational leadership theories fail to describe the full development of its followers. Similarly, another analyst, Beyer (1999) remarked that the theory needs to be used to survey conditions that determine the occurrence and presence of transformational leadership (as cited in Keena, 2006, p. 14).

In summary Burns and Reeves (1978, as cited in Keena, 2006) defined leadership as a process, not a prescriptive set of separate stages. It is a mutual process in which both the leader and the follower affect or inspire each other over time. For Burns and Reeves, transforming leadership may be demonstrated by anyone in an organization, regardless of position (Keena, 2006, p. 14).

Servant-Leadership

Robert K. Greenleaf (1904-1990) is credited with introducing the servant leadership concept among modern organizational theorists (Spears, 1995). According to Keena (2006), the term was adapted by Greenleaf in 1970 after reading Herman Hesse’s 1965 novel, *Journey to the east*.
The central figure of story is Leo, who accompanies the party as the *servant* who does their menial chores, but who also sustains them with his spirit and his song. He is a person of extraordinary presence. All goes well until Leo disappears. Then the group falls into disarray and the journey is abandoned. They cannot make it without the servant Leo. (Greenleaf & Spears, 2002, p. 21)

In the first chapter of his 2002 book, *Servant leadership*, Greenleaf described his core belief that the top priority of the leader is service. In his words, leadership “begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead” (Greenleaf & Spears, 2002, p. 27). The servant leader’s primary objective is to serve and meet the needs of others, which should be the prime motivation for leadership (Stone, 2002). According to Greenleaf, “if one is servant, either leader or follower, one is always searching, listening, or expecting” a more caring humanity (Greenleaf, 1970, p. 3).

By using Greenleaf’s original writings, Spears (1998), extracted a set of 10 characteristics of the servant-leader which he believed are indispensable to achieve positive change throughout society.

1. Servant leaders emphasize their decision to listen intently to others.
2. Servant leaders empathize with others and recognize their unique qualities.
3. Servant leaders help followers to recover and heal from emotional hurt and multiple other factors.
4. Servant leaders are committed to nurturing awareness of others in order to develop holistic perspectives.
5. Servant leaders rely on persuasion versus personal authority in decision making, seeking to convince followers instead of coercing their compliance.
6. Servant leaders have a balanced and long-term conceptual perspective view over the issues.
7. Servant leader foresees predictable outcomes based on previous experiences, present realities, and likely consequences of future decisions.

8. Servant leaders are agents dedicated to serving the needs of others with morality and persuasion.

9. Servant leaders are committed to the growth of their followers and believe they have key value outside of their regular contributions. Thus, servant leaders are encouraging the followers in decision making, inviting them to participate with resources, taking personal interest in followers’ ideas, and making fund available for development.

10. Servant leaders seek to build community, moving from large institutions to local communities primarily modeling human lives (Greenleaf & Spears, 1998).

For Greenleaf, the best test of true servant leadership is to ask if we are leaving those led “better off than they were” before (Greenleaf & Spears, 2002, p. 27). In prison ministry, the participation of the volunteers and their service is an extension of what we are in Jesus Christ. The leader of the church, which is the pastor, is there to serve, to find ways and means to refresh the life, to encourage and to bring hope when people are afraid, to experience how to avoid failure and to be the first paving a new method.

Prison ministry gives the church a unique opportunity for a deep positive change and transformation, but it needs to be approached with a servant heart. This was the same attitude that was in Jesus Christ when no one else wanted to be considered a servant. With only a towel wrapped around his waist, he knelt down to wash his disciples’ feet and drying them with the towel. This overwhelming gesture made a lasting impression on the disciples, not only because it expressed pure love, but by washing their feet, Jesus laid the foundation for true servant leadership; prison ministry is inspired by His model.
The next chapter will describe the strategies we used in developing and implementing a jail and prison ministry as a permanent ministry of the Adventist Church in Salem, Illinois. Because I learned from so many others I believe that in principle what we did is broadly applicable to all denominational and interdenominational communities of faith. A brief evaluation of the spiritual growth of those who participated, the implications of our experience for ministry and recommendations pastors, churches and the denomination will be included in the final chapter of this document.
CHAPTER 4

IMPLEMENTATION OF PRISON MINISTRY AT SALEM ADVENTIST CHURCH

The Local Church Context

This chapter describes the implementation of jail and prison ministry in the local Adventist church in Salem, Illinois. Observing that we, as a denomination, do not have a strong tradition in this type of ministry, I developed a strategy for jail and prison ministry based on past experience in this field, a strategy suited to the local context, and the need for an effective ministry program.

The History of the Church in Salem

The church in Salem, which is located in Marion County, has a very interesting history. In spite of the fact that Adventists have been present in Marion County for about 75 years, only recently has the group of believers in Salem, Illinois, become an official church. A heavy emphasis on evangelism has led to steady growth in this region saturated by a strong Southern Baptist influence.

Relocation From Centralia to Salem

For almost 60 years Salem church was known as “Centralia Adventist Church.” In August, 2007, a great opportunity appeared when the Centralia church was relocated from the city of Centralia to the city of Salem, which is located 20 miles northeast in the same county. In fact, 50% of the church members were residents of Salem for many years. The location of the new building in Salem offered exposure for the Adventists and
its central position was considered a great asset for the missionary and outreach initiatives of the church.

At first, the new building was intended as an outreach project of the church in Centralia, but later most of the members decided to move the entire church to the new location and use the opportunity to envision a fresh qualitative and quantitative growth.

On the one hand, the purchase of the building and involvement of the congregation in remodeling the new location kept people motivated to cast a new vision. On the other hand, depleting financial and other resources made it impossible to achieve evangelistic and outreach plans, thus postponing growth expectations for the future.

However, the Adventist message was not new for the community of Salem, despite the fact that no Adventist church was established there before 2007. In 1985, one of the charter members of the Centralia church living in Salem, sponsored the first ever downlink of the 3ABN television ministry, providing Adventist local television for five counties in southern Illinois: Marion, Jefferson, Clinton, Washington, and Fayette. The original rebroadcasting tower is functioning today, in 2012.

Church’s Historical Growth

The Adventist church of Centralia, Illinois was established in the early 1940s as a result of public evangelism in tents. The initiative was taken, and the church was organized by a group of church planters who formed the core of an enthusiastic group of devoted Christians. They were able to purchase a former school building, which was adapted and used for public worship and evangelism. The group continued to grow steadily until 1957 when they reached over 70 members. A pastor was then assigned to minister to the newly-formed district, which included the church of Centralia.
The previous period of growth, however, slowed to a halt by the late 1950s, and the membership decreased by nearly half. Discovering some detailed records of the Centralia church’s early days, I became interested in finding the reason behind such a membership decline rate. So I researched, and the inquiry led to detecting or perhaps inferring, two main reasons for the drastic decline. First, some of the members forming the core group moved away, transferring the leadership to the new converts who joined the church from the local territories. Second, and more interesting, is that, according to the board meetings’ minutes, the interest in outreach began to dwindle, as concern for, and attention to internal matters began to increase. The desire of the new church to avoid worldly influence resulted in the congregation placing some of the new members under church discipline or disfellowshipping them.

At the time I was assigned as pastor for Centralia in June 2003, the membership numbered less than 40. Some of them were the initial members of the nascent movement of the 1940s, while others had joined the church between 1970 and 2000. A very consistent segment of the church was composed of converts who joined the church as a result of 3ABN’s television ministry. All of them mirrored the same pattern in their conversion: searching for and finding a local Adventist church, and showing up at the Sabbath church service after privately watching 3ABN programming between four to seven years. Most of them had no Adventist connections or friends in the local congregation at the time they decided to join the church. For these people, the message was more important than their current personal relationships, and as such they generally considered themselves, having followed 3ABN for so long, fully prepared to join the Adventist church upon their first visits.
Members’ View of the Church

During the first two years of ministry in Centralia district, I was interested to identify the members’ view of the church, and how that perspective influenced their religious and spiritual life. It was during the church service, the social meeting, the business meeting, personal visitations, and extensive pastoral counseling that I listened, probed for, discovered, and collected this information.

Most of the members identified the church as a building where individuals within a church’s sphere of influence would gather for the purpose of worshipping together. There they were led through the preaching of the Bible on the weekend or at the midweek prayer meeting by a pastor assigned by the conference to fulfill an ecclesiastical function.

Even though I fully respected the opinion of those church members, I will always advocate that God’s church is greater than the bricks and mortar that hold his disciples. When the New Testament mentions “the church,” it is talking about people—the body of Christ—who received the Holy Spirit and are sent to preach the Gospel. The book of Acts ascribes emotions and actions to the church. “Great fear seized the whole church” (Acts 5:11) and “the church sent them on their way” (Acts 15:3). With this perspective in mind, we’re not “going to church”—we are the church.

A segment of the church membership held the perception that their place of worship is very important as a testimony to the surrounding community. One day, they reasoned, outsiders will become curious enough to come to Sabbath-morning worship with all of their religious questions, and eventually decide to join the “true church.”

Another small segment of the members saw the church as the Christ-centered, Bible-based place of fellowship, committed to bring hope. The place, some said, should be a focal point of our community in proclaiming the good news of Jesus’ soon return.
They believed that the church is a place for families, singles, seniors, youth and children. While they held this theoretical view, however, they lacked any implementation process for such a role of the church. They dreamed that one day a zealous pastor would be assigned to their church to: motivate the people, empower them, give them permission for outreach projects, and implement programs, resulting in their little church being elevated to the level of a large respectable congregation.

**Patriarchal Leadership**

The church was located in a community that subsisted mainly on farming. Most of the members converted to Adventism were modest people with limited financial resources. The most influential person in the Centralia church was one of the charter members who became an Adventist in the early 1940s. He owned many hundreds of acres of land, and, for the past 50 years, provided leadership and financial support every time the church was struggling with small or great needs. The church board made no decisions without his approval, and he was not expected to consult anyone when he had an initiative involving church matters.

Arriving at the church one day, I found the old doors replaced with new freshly painted ones. No one knew about this renovation, but everyone assumed that the old patriarch initiated the action, so they just called him to express their appreciation for what he had done. He sponsored the 3ABN programming for the local area and donated the money to purchase the new building in Salem, where the church from Centralia was relocated in 2007. In 2012, he was almost 95, still vibrant and well respected by the church members. In spite of all the blessings received from this great leader, implementing jail and prison ministry was a real challenge for the Salem church.
The Church’s View of Evangelism

By default, from the very beginning of its history, the words Adventist church and the word evangelism were words which belonged together. Over time, the connotation of evangelism was adjusted or changed by the many influential elements existing in the local church. This shift in concept did not always move toward a better understanding. As a result, there were occasions when the members of the church debated issues that were clearly defined in the past, but had little relevance for them in the present.

Adventism has always had a sense of urgency about evangelism with a concurrent guilt arising from failure to share the message, which negatively affects longtime church members. Every local church has its own history and knowing this history will help people and their leaders better understand where they are. The present church of Salem, which is a continuation of the former church of Centralia, has its history, too.

Public Evangelism Versus Personal Evangelism

The history of the Centralia church records members’ special interest in evangelism and community outreach. However, the evangelistic events organized by the church in the last twenty years, including the NETs broadcasted live via satellite, were not very successful, and affected members in two ways. First, they lost the confidence that the Adventist message is relevant for our society today and second, they were progressively discouraged in planning other events relying on their own human resources. The rationale was very simple and practical. If the preaching of Mark Finley was not having much impact on the community, how effective could their efforts be in witnessing to the same secular society?
Another issue the church in Centralia faced was the membership’s dependence on the daily broadcasts of 3ABN television. They always expected to see in their local church the same attendance and the same quality of preaching they saw on television. In addition, they experienced a type of religious saturation after watching three or four great sermons each day. This righteous overweight generated a holy laziness and an unhealthy balance of the “give and take” principle. In many cases, personal witnessing occasions were limited to a viewing a “Revelation Seminar” recorded on a VHS tape with no interaction at all.

Because most of the church members understood Adventism as a lifestyle of isolation from the sinful world, their personal relationships with the outside were cut off. After years of living without an intentional public agenda, the church members had no friends to invite to evangelistic events and no courage or knowledge about how to make new ones.

Bible Study and Baptism

Fortunately the church of Centralia and later, the church of Salem was a good place for members’ personal development. This circumstance shaped a team of serious Bible students among its members. When I arrived in 2003, the church’s most interesting activity was the Sabbath School class where members were able to discuss and debate most of the doctrines and creeds specific to our denomination. I considered that an opportunity for evangelism without officially setting a different time for public meetings. Church members were encouraged to invite their family members to participate in the Sabbath School class.
I remember one particular non-Adventist friend who began to attend class every Sabbath morning. Since he had a network of friends outside the church, after a few months he invited many of his friends to participate in Sabbath School and to bring their questions to the table to be searched and answered in a spiritual context. The guests enjoyed the friendship and open mindedness of the Adventists, especially those guests who had previously attended other evangelical churches where they were not satisfied with the superficiality and brevity of the Bible study.

As the result of these Bible study classes of the regular Sabbath School division during the subsequent four years, we were able to welcome new people into the Centralia church, to restore the unused baptismal tank, and to record an annual church growth of at least 10%. Yet in spite of the positive outcome, we reached only a small segment of our society, especially those who were looking and searching for answers about God and His Word. Still church members were afraid to use new ways of approaching people and declined some great opportunities to meet people where they were. Their mindset needed to be adjusted from acting as a tolerated minority to performing as special messengers of God. It was evident that spiritual satisfaction was directly proportional with church members’ self-esteem. A low self-esteem damages our lives. It prevents us from reaching our fullest potential. It destroys our dreams. It ruins our relationships. Also, it prevents us from getting involved in the Body of Christ.

**Attendance and Training**

One mirror that reflects the potential of a church is the members’ attendance at weekly worship events, and other programs organized during the week. Since the conference required a monthly report, it is safe to affirm that the church in Salem kept a
constant membership attendance averaging two thirds of its total membership. Generally, the active members who are involved at any level in church life are very faithful with their participation in the church worship service. However, since these faithful ones at Salem were generally of a later-life demographic, they usually did not participate in any extracurricular social or community programs, presumably due to the extra adaptive energy required. Almost an entire generation is missing from churches, like Salem, located in rural agricultural areas. Many of those who were added to the church in their childhood several decades ago remain on the record books without any current ties or desire to return to the church.

In spite of members’ reluctance for having reaping events without thorough preparation, people participated in public evangelistic meetings organized by the church with the desire that one day a miracle would happen and people would march into their church. Members consider attendance a duty or necessity, rather than a pleasure.

In the church building at Centralia, I was surprised to find an entire room that served as a repository of a great quantity and variety of training materials accumulated over the years. The yellow frayed papers, folders, and books that were once new gave evidence that the church had, over the course of the years, been able to conduct various training sessions. However, the toilsome theoretical preparation, without a practical application of the learned principles contributed to a general discouragement, and gave rise to the feeling that something else, besides training, is necessary for a successful witnessing life. The personal relationship with outside people was missing and no one was able to define, or to offer a solution for improving this aspect.
The Church’s View of Community Outreach

At the heart of the community outreach is the desire to fulfill the plan Jesus gave His followers. According to geographical position, this is not always an easy task. Because of its location in southern Illinois, the Salem/Centralia church was exposed to a very strong southern evangelical culture. How did this impact the small Adventist community, its mission, and its community outreach strategies?

The Impact of Southern Evangelical Culture

One of the first things I discovered at the beginning of my pastoral ministry in Centralia, Illinois concerned the impression evangelical churches held of the Adventist church, namely, they identified Adventists as a cultic movement. Leaders and members belonging to other denominations would refer to Adventists as a non-Christian sect that worked hard to steal members from their churches and then brainwashed their new converts for the purpose of implementing a secret agenda outlined by their woman prophet, Ellen White.

At the time we moved the church to Salem, we decided to organize a grand opening event. We extended an open invitation to other churches to be our guests. Even though only a few accepted our invitation, it was a great opportunity to initiate a dialogue, to begin clearing away some dire misconceptions, and to send a clear message that we were interested in a friendly relationship. That same month I volunteered to join Marion County Ministerial Alliance, which was the best place where I could meet and relate with most of the religious leaders surrounding our Adventist community. Once there I realized that this broken relationship between Adventists and evangelicals was not only the result of our members’ low self-esteem but also was a direct result of a lapse in
communication and poor public relations from both sides. By default, Adventists were considered in the same category as Jehovah’s Witnesses and Mormons, and the entire religious community had no interest in developing an intentional relationship with any Adventist member. However, in spite of this misconception, I was well received and easily integrated into the Ministerial Alliance schedule of activities. Soon we opened the doors of our church building to host some community activities and I witnessed the surprise expressed by some of the religious leaders when they entered an Adventist church for the first time.

The Desire for Community Outreach

The church of Centralia/Salem had a deep desire to participate in any type of community outreach. Because of their image as a cultic movement, they were not successful in developing strong programs. Nevertheless, some of the church members managed to create some personal networks where they had the opportunity to minister to the needs of their elderly neighbors.

Outreach Programs

After I joined the Ministerial Alliance, more opportunities began to arrive. Slowly, the long-held, blemished view of Adventists was ready to be enhanced, as the ministerial alliance accepted us as a part of the yearly community programs.

We, as a church, needed to reevaluate some of our views as well. Primarily some new doors were now open to us, and we could be involved in what that particular church had dreamed of for years. Conversely, we were not yet ready to accept working together with those who were our enemies for many prior decades. As a pastor, I was often discouraged realizing that we, as a church, were reluctant and without vision when the
opportunities came into our own hands. When the Ministerial Alliance was looking for a church building facility to host a weekly *Chicken Soup* program for poor and destitute people of our community, I was excited as I perceived this to be a great opportunity for our church to open its door to the community. This would be sponsored by the ministerial alliance and cost us nothing. Sadly, I was frustrated and chagrined when the church board decided to reject this project due to an increased liability which might raise the property insurance, and over the suspicion that, because the sponsors were not Adventist, unclean foods might end up in the building.

While the above example was unfortunate, our church reconsidered that attitude and gradually opened their hearts and church doors for people. The Adventist church started to participate in the weekly *Food Pantry*, a program sponsored by the collective effort of churches from the Ministerial Alliance, who also organized a bell ringing donation program during the winter holidays at the entrances to local stores. Working together alongside non-remnant individuals and being involved in community outreach programs was not easy for some of our members. Yet, since participation for these projects was on a volunteer basis, we continued to work with and involve those who were willing and ready.

Another example of an outreach program for our church was hosting seasonal county events in our church building, such as a Thanksgiving Service, Good Friday Service, or the National Day of Prayer, where the entire community was invited to participate. As a pastor, I was invited to speak at different events, and was now regarded, and introduced by other religious leaders as their friend.
Finally, another type of outreach program was an unusual ministry that addressed one of the principles we as Seventh-day Adventists value most, that of marriage. Commencing with one specific instance in which a non-Adventist couple came to inquire if our church might marry them for a “low price,” I agreed to wed them free of charge if they would agree to three sessions of marital counseling at the church office. Once they went through the counseling and were united as husband and wife in our church, the news exploded about our willingness to marry people free of charge. Many couples, then, requested to be married. In some cases, we had families with children that lived together for many years, but without the blessing of holy matrimony. Soon, our church became known throughout the entire community as the place where people could be married free of charge, following three sessions of counseling.

**Development and Implementation of the Program**

An implementation plan is necessary for moving a project from the developmental stage to the service provision stage. Implementation plans will vary from community to community. In our situation, jail and prison ministry required a plan to determine a timeline for implementation, a) starting with an assessment of the local church resources, including member’s qualifications for training and educational purposes, b) continuing with the recruitment process, c) the four session training, and d) ending with the necessary support for the ministry team accepting this call to volunteer for jail and prison ministry.

**Assessing the Current Situation**

One of the most important stages in creating and implementing a new program in the local church is to identify the priorities and objectives of that particular community
and the main reasons that would recommend a certain project to be considered as a potentially successful one. The next section will reveal how and why we considered jail and prison ministry for the church in Salem.

**Outreach and Evangelistic Expectations of the Church**

After more than half a century of Adventist church history in Centralia, the new location in Salem generated members’ desires for a new beginning. Once we celebrated the new opening in 2007, with a great crowd attending the event, church members raised their expectations to a very high level.

First of all, the move was considered a great opportunity to rethink the strategy of the local church, to set up a new direction for evangelism and outreach, to update the mission statement, and to find ways to become relevant in our neighborhood territory and beyond. Most of the members expected that many good things would happen in a very short period of time and their energies were stimulated by these high expectations.

Secondly, their anticipation was not only in regard to the movement of the church to a new location, but also about their pastor. Because of my cultural background growing up in a former communist country, when I first arrived in this district, church members were very curious how I would relate to the local customs and culture. After a couple of years when we managed to build a trust relationship, the church members started to see the pastor as a pivotal liaison between the church and the surrounding community. It was in this context that they started to express their hope as soon as we moved to the new location. Even though the members were very supportive of my ministry and leadership style, they had their own ways of dealing with every situation. Many times we spent much time finding common ground for a shared vision. Overall, our
dialogue and the interactive discussions were helpful and essential in the desired process of growing outside our respective comfort zones. Having high expectations makes any project harder, but the results are more enjoyable in the end.

**Low Tolerance for Failure**

One important characteristic of the project to be implemented in the local church was to ensure a low risk of failure. As I mentioned in the previous section, church members were afraid to open their hearts to try a new evangelistic or outreach program, primarily because often they experienced no or very little success in the past and their inner nature was to avoid any disappointment around this area.

It is almost impossible to go through life without experiencing some kind of failure. In the church setting, people who experience failure often live cautiously, questioning every step made in an unknown direction. Without proof of the low risk, they're not invested in that project.

The wonderful thing about failure is that it is entirely up to us to decide how to look at a new challenge. We can choose to see failure as the end of the world, or as evidence of just how insufficient we are. The times we fail at something, we can choose to look for the lesson we need to learn. These lessons are very important; they teach us how to grow and how to keep from making that same mistake again. Failures stop us only if we let them. In order to move on, I was convinced from my past experience that prison ministry offers a low risk of failure. It was only a matter of time and opportunity for presenting a holistic view of this special ministry.
Limited Financial Resources

Not only due to the recent national economic challenges, but also because traditionally this was a low-income area, day-to-day living had become tough and finances were tight for the majority of Centralia/Salem church members, who belonged to the low or middle class. The unemployment rate was very high in southern Illinois compared with other parts of the state. Many individuals were laid off work, gas prices were on a continual rise, and groceries were at their highest prices ever. How do we support financially a new ministry in the church when we can hardly manage to survive from month to month? One of the few options we had was to engage in a ministry that does not become a burden for the local church or to find sponsors or coworkers who have the same interest in the ministry.

It is relatively easy to measure results when it comes to money. The weekly offering and tithe reports tell the truth. At the same time, one of the largest challenges a leader will ever face is successfully inspiring people to trust God with their finances and remain obedient to generous giving. It takes financial resources to reach people for Jesus and historically the job of soliciting donations to the church is attributed to the pastor. Here was a little challenge. Yes, I decided to inspire the church members when we came to the financial issues. But also I need to confess that from an early age when I started to be involved in a different church ministry, I realized that fund raising is not one of my strengths. Years later in my leadership capacity I admit that I never became very involved in this topic. However, I was blessed with a gift that is closely related with financial needs. I don’t know how to make money, but I know how to save money. Looking back it is easy to comprehend that I was not successful in motivating people to donate their money, but I was very efficient in helping them to save the little they had. I don’t
remember stopping a project or a ministry because we had little or no funds available. God faithfully provided the amount needed for continuing ministry.

**Local Human Resources**

Traditionally, the great evangelistic meetings are not hosted by the members of the local churches, but instead special guests and evangelists are invited to conduct these soul-winning events. While these types of events are important, the New Testament is clear that all members of the Body of Christ are called to exercise a ministry of witness and service. No one is excluded.

Also, the human resources used by a local church to implement an evangelistic or outreach program are closely tied with the financial resources mentioned in previous paragraphs. Importing important people is expensive in spite of the fact that we claim to be a universally-united missionary church. During the planning and envisioning stages with the church and its board members, we considered the possibility of inviting a professional evangelist from *Amazing Facts* to host an evangelistic program in our church. After strong arguments were presented and discussed, we voted to reject that option for a very simple reason. We wanted the best evangelist for the best work to be done in our territory, but in accordance with our limited financial resources, our church qualified for only a second- or third-class evangelist from the list provided by the *Amazing Facts* ministry. They listed people doing evangelism at different costs, claiming that the most expensive one is the best one. We found this principle inconsistent and incompatible with our understanding of mission.

Finally, we believed that the practice of ministry is both an offering to God and a service to His Church. By the miracle of grace, the work of the ministry can become a
means of grace for God’s people (Rom 12:1-3). Also, personal involvement is a condition of growing and a secure way to transition from ignorance to knowledge and became fully educated for Jesus’ commission. I fully agree with White’s view when she defined an intense reason to be involved in ministry:

Educated workers who are consecrated to God can do service in a greater variety of ways and can accomplish more extensive work than can those who are uneducated. Their discipline of mind places them on vantage ground. But those who have neither great talents nor extensive education may minister acceptably to others. God will use men who are willing to be used. It is not the most brilliant or the most talented persons whose work produces the greatest and most lasting results. Men and women are needed who have heard a message from heaven. The most effective workers are those who respond to the Jesus invitation in Matthew 11:29, “Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me.” (White, 2002, p. 150)

**Immediate Satisfaction**

One of the greatest challenges for our age group is the tension between immediate and deferred enjoyment. In the context of the informational technology revolution, our generation obviously shifted from a mindset of deferred gratification to an almost obsession with immediate gratification. One reason traditional evangelism was considered a failure is the fact that this approach does not bring immediate results from the seed sown.

Factors have contributed to the change toward this immediate satisfaction pattern. In previous generations, families would save in order to make a major acquisition, but today people can use a credit card to get it now and pay later. The media has also contributed impressively to this immediate fulfillment thinking, especially with the help of a TV commercial which invites purchase of a certain item that will bring happiness. Communications have improved so rapidly we are not willing to await the traditional
letter to learn about our friends and family any more, but instead are in almost instant contact with the whole world via email and internet.

If 2000 years ago this struggle between immediate gratification and deferred gratification was seen when the rich young man approached Jesus about what is necessary to get to Heaven, today this picture is all too common among ordinary people.

Of course to see immediate results is not necessarily something negative, especially when church members didn’t see any results for a while. This particular request, immediate satisfaction, was addressed by our church members and became a challenge to be accepted with its advantages and disadvantages.

My Qualifications for Leading Prison Ministry

Many people have questioned why we, as a church and as individuals, spend our time and energy working to start a jail and prison ministry. Why was this action well-matched with the actual condition of Salem church? Why was this ministry a great occasion to be employed as a viable solution for evangelism and outreach?

Previous Experience

Prison ministry was not new for me. The interest I have in prison ministry started more than 20 years ago, just months after the falling of communism in the eastern European region, including my native country of Romania. In 1990, I participated in an inspirational and training meeting event in Bucharest, Romania, featuring the topic of prison ministry conducted by Mr. Richard Blend, the president and founder of United Prison Ministry International, a non-profit organization in Verbena, Alabama. I was impressed by Mr. Blend’s presentation as he was currently ministering in thousands of prisons in all 50 states and hundreds of prisons around the world. Since the country of
Romania just opened its doors for prison ministry after 45 years of communism, I accepted the call to start working as a volunteer in two of the main prisons of Romania, one with a male population in Caragiale, located in Dambovita County, and another one with a female population in Targsor, located in Prahova County. For the next three years, I was part of a team providing inmates with a positive lifestyle. We were committed to reaching out to prisoners and their families organizing educational classes, Bible studies, Revelation Seminars, a prison choir, and also youth services for juvenile sections of the prisons.

My desire to join prison ministry was not only based on an inspirational presentation by a visionary man, but also because in the past during the communist regime, prison took a toll when our friends and loved ones were incarcerated and left behind bars. Like many others in that generation, my father was sentenced to six years in prison for the simple reason that he chose to be faithful to his spiritual and religious convictions. He was committed to keeping the Sabbath holy during his service time in the army, but his decision was not appreciated by the representative of the communist regime. He was court martialed for insubordination. Out of his entire sentence, he was kept in prison for four and a half years. Because he was considered dangerous for the regime, the stigma extended to his family and friends as well. Growing up as a son of a political prisoner was not easy in a communist country. At that point I developed a desire to minister to inmates, especially to those suffering for wrong reasons, waiting and praying for a time in the future when that opportunity would become possible. This opportunity came in early 1990 after the revolution in December 1989 when the communist regime was defeated by the Romanian people.
Before I considered it for implementation by the Salem church, my most recent involvement in prison ministry was my journey as a volunteer chaplain at Big Muddy River correctional facility, one of the largest state prisons in Illinois. During 2005, I received several invitations by mail from two inmates to conduct a Bible study class in that prison. It is not unusual for inmates to search the addresses of the churches in their area, send letters, and express their desire to have someone, preferable the pastor, minister to them at the location where they are incarcerated. One of the main topics of debate among inmates is religion. Since I was familiar with prison ministry from my prior experience in Romania, I decide to take this opportunity and in a few months I was able to prepare myself for this new experiment.

Several months elapsed before I was admitted inside the Big Muddy River prison. Some training sessions were required by Illinois state legislation and an extensive background check was performed. I assessed my schedule in order to avoid conflicting events and set a certain time every week when I could be available and committed to prison ministry. In September 2006 I was able to start the program two times per week: two hours on Wednesday afternoons, forming a choir with the prison inmates, and two hours on Thursday evenings for a Bible study. The choir was limited to 20 people while the study group was limited to 60 people. In less than two months, every seat was taken and we started to work with waiting lists for those who desired to participate in the programs. Besides direct teaching, another way to enlarge the prison ministry was a thorough preparation of those inmates able to share and re-teach the Bible study in their own words with their friends and cell-mates, outside the weekly chapel program. At the end of the regular Bible study, I had an average of five people asking for extra guides to
be used in their own groups. As the result of this method, a year later a few of the baptismal candidates were from those who never attended the official Bible study in the chapel, but were guided and instructed by other inmates. In a short time the Bible study group considered themselves “the little church in prison,” the place where they thrived and faithfully participated every single week. After three years of ministry, I was able to baptize more than 40 people out of that Bible study group. Even though no church members were involved on site at the time I started the ministry in Big Muddy River Prison, certain church members wrote letters to those inmates who had lost communication with their outside friends and families, and who expressed their desire to communicate with other people. In 2010 I was able to find more writing partners from the surrounding Adventist churches interested in prison ministry at that particular location. After some months of training, they were able to take over the leadership of the ministry and faithfully continue to preach the Gospel to those in need.

**Jail Ministry Coordination**

Shortly after we relocated the church in Salem, I participated in the monthly meetings of the Marion County Ministerial Alliance. At that time the Ministerial Alliance was looking for a Jail Ministry Coordinator, due to the fact that the previous coordinator, a Baptist minister, accepted a call to pastoral ministry out of state. After sharing with the other ministers of the Ministerial Alliance about my prison ministry in Ina, Illinois (Big Muddy River Correctional Center), I received the invitation to become the Jail Ministry Coordinator for Marion County. The county jail in Salem was populated with a daily average of over 100 inmates.
The primary responsibility of the Jail Ministry Coordinator was to recruit people from different Marion County churches for prison ministry. Also, the coordinator had the responsibility to facilitate a spiritual environment for the inmates residing in Marion County, working to schedule the volunteers who expressed the desire to be involved. He was to work directly with the sheriff and jail manager addressing any religious and spiritual issues connected with Marion County jail. Since, the jail did not have its own chaplain, the voluntary position in the Marion County Ministerial Alliance covered for this responsibility as well.

In this context I accepted the invitation and starting January 2008 I become Jail Ministry Coordinator, a position I retained until January 2012 when I moved from that area. Once in that capacity I received unconditional support from the Ministerial Alliance and the churches represented by this alliance. Although this position challenged my schedule already filled with pastoring four churches, I was able to recognize the opportunity of engaging an open and fruitful interdenominational relationship with the purpose of making friends for eternity. Suddenly the traditional view of the Adventist church improved and not only the religious leaders, but their members as well, started to consider Adventists as devoted Christians who care about their community and were ready to relate nonjudgmentally with their brothers and sisters of other denominations. I considered it worthy to be mentioned that no meeting of the Ministerial Alliance contained any agenda for ecumenism or giving up some of the individual principles that any particular church may value in their denomination.
Combined Goals

After I officially accepted the nomination for Jail Ministry Coordinator, it was obvious that this was a great opportunity for ministry especially because our Adventist church was considered a potential part of this project. I envisioned an extensive presentation for our church members giving this historical opportunity, when we could combine in one project our plan for evangelism and community outreach. I considered that having direct access to jail and prison ministry in our own territory, which was one mile away from the church’s location in the city of Salem, that this would meet the church expectation listed above as requirements, not limited to, but including low risk of failure, limited financial resources, using the local human resources, and gaining an immediate satisfaction.

Recruitment

There are times in our life when a familiar passage of the Scripture becomes essential in carrying out a task to the people you lead. Regardless of the risks that may transpire, sometimes the vision we receive cannot be neglected, and obeying it may be the only option we see at that time. Jeremiah 29:11 empowered me to present the jail and prison ministry project and to look for people in the Salem church that would respond and accept the challenge of becoming relevant to our community: “For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord. Plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future.” The next section describes how I motivated church members for jail and prison ministry.
The Absence of Trainers/Denominational Resources

I briefly mentioned in Chapter 3 that the Seventh-day Adventist Church invests few resources and little interest in prison ministry. However, prison ministry is a larger concept, including the support of the spiritual and religious needs not only of the prisoners, but of the volunteer workers, and also of prison guards and staff, whose work often creates a special need for pastoral care.

My approach for finding the proper resources to start a prison ministry was through an extended interdenominational search, where I found and borrowed a lot of ideas and necessary information. Then I adapted those resources to our church in Salem. The compilation presented in this chapter served the original goal of implementing prison ministry for our church members. Many of these sources or documents can be found on internet web sites. While I found and adapted them, I do not claim authorship unless specifically noted.

One of the resources I used extensively is *Prison ministry: A guide to resources,* an online PDF guide resource updated in 2010, and developed by members and friends within the Community of Christ and other organizations. In their own introduction, Community of Christ gives credit to the United Methodist Church for graciously sharing their own prison ministry resource, *Congregational toolbox for prison ministry,* by Betsey Heavner, published by Discipleship Resources and available as a PDF download from www.GBOD.org.

Another main resource I used for training purpose and motivation was *You came unto me: A training manual for jail and prison ministry.* This instruction course is part of the Harvestime International Institute located in Laguna Woods, California, a program designed to equip believers for effective spiritual harvest. The manual is available for
access and can be downloaded free of charge in PDF or DOC formats at http://www.globalchristians.org/pdf/jail-and-prison-manual.pdf.

Among Adventist denominational resources, I found two that helped me in adapting to our own local context. The first is called *Florida Conference prison ministries training manual* and is authored by Frank Barton, Florida Prison Ministries Coordinator. It was last revised on December 7, 2004 and can be downloaded from http://www.bcne.net/files/Documents/Evangelism/Ministry%20Evangelism/Prison%20in%20training_manual.pdf. The second is called *Basic training for prison ministry*. It is listed under the Adult Ministry Department of the North American Division and was compiled by Dr. Cleveland Houser. However, this second manual is valuable in identifying the principles for doing Prison Ministry, but it contains specific information and data only for the geographical location of New Jersey’s Department of Correction. This manual can be found at www.nadadultministries.org/pdf/PrisonManual/prison.pdf.

It seems that any complete resource for prison ministry needs to include a large interdenominational spectrum of guides and instruction dealing with this topic. Then it would be the responsibility of the church leaders or ministry teams to examine, adapt, and convert previous experience to their own situation.

**Invitation to Take the Opportunity**

Predominantly, prison ministry will spark an interest for those who have been in jail or have a member of the family/friend imprisoned. Then, another sector of the church who will be touched are those having a big heart for every ministry and certainly they would like to be part of the project. Still, another little segment will be motivated by
curiosity about this ministry. Finally, there will be a group of the church members who will not be interested and will never become involved in prison ministry.

Based on my previous experience, I knew that motivation for prison ministry requires more than a simple announcement in a church bulletin or a formal notice during the church service. I considered it very important to set a special day and service, when the motivation for jail and prison ministry would constitute the core message of the last sermon of my four-Sabbath preaching series emphasizing practical Christianity. It was my anticipation that church members would view prison ministry as a natural result of the salvation we received from the Lord Jesus Christ. I prepared my sermon from Matthew 25, a Scripture passage that reveals Jesus commands to His disciples for treating others with care and compassion, including visiting those in prison. The outline of the sermon was a compact version of Chapter 2 of this project document. As result, I expected people to be inspired and motivated for prison ministry, even though inherently they have no attraction or sympathy for this ministry. After the sermon, I played a five-minute motivational video called *A life transformed*, uploaded on Youtube.com for sharing by WoodsEdge Media and found at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4cPtrH68hW4. A group of 10 people responded to the appeal I made at the end of this special service. Was this a good response?

**Selecting the Team**

I knew from the beginning that prison ministry is not for everyone. But how else would I know, if I didn’t try it out? On one hand the little group of 10 people represented one fifth of the church membership, which was great. On the other hand, I knew that once started and with reports being systematically presented to the church, others would
express their interest in the ministry and sooner or later more people would join the little group. Although some people will never be part of the effective work inside of jails and prisons, some individuals are glad to join the prayer team.

Once I had a group of people willing to be part of this ministry, it was important to know the answer to the following questions:

1. Has the person had prior prison ministry experience?
2. Does the person have any musical talent?
3. Are the volunteers able to speak another language?
4. Do they have the ability to lead a small group?
5. Do they have their own transportation?
6. What are their spiritual gifts? Teaching and counseling are two important gifts for jail and prison ministry.
7. Are they ex-offenders? If so, check to be sure that they will be allowed access to the prison.

All this information was collected during the first training session as I planned to strengthen the team and focus on those aspects that needed the most improvement.

**Requires Adequate Motivation/Training**

After identifying those who responded to the motivational appeal, I personally acknowledged and congratulated them for their decision. Also, I informed them about the four-session training already prepared, which would start the following day, once per week, for the next four Sundays. In spite of the fact that some people believe that prison ministry may require more love and less training, the four-session preparation equips volunteers for effective jail and prison ministry. Since I have had enough experience with
previous prison ministry, other motivational specialists and trainers were not needed at that time, but as the Jail Ministry Coordinator for Marion County, I planned to form a networking opportunity to encourage learning from others who share the same passion and ministry.

Brief Introduction of the Four-Session Training

The four-session training, as the core motivational and didactic instrument, is a natural process emerging from personal theological research into the topic, as well as from my desire to offer an alternative to the traditional church routes of evangelism and community outreach. This strategy assisted the Salem congregation to passionately fulfill the great Gospel commission, to enjoy the work, to have both immediate and lasting satisfactions, and to make a significant impact in the church’s surrounding area. A detailed process of this training will be elaborated on in the next chapter of this case study.

Support

Once the ministry started, the participants were enthusiastic about this outreach missionary program and ready to continue their involvement in accordance with their initial commitment. Even though the four-session training seminar gave us a push for starting this ministry, it was very important that we were not neglecting the necessary support for continuing this ministry. In the past many good projects were unsuccessful, not because of the shortage of enthusiasm or motivation, but because of the absence of support, especially after the ministry was started. In this section, I list some areas of support to be discussed and implemented in regard with jail and prison ministry.
After the first visit at the Marion County Jail, where the ministry team experienced the first contact of this kind, we decided to have another session, not part of the initial training, but necessary for debriefing the first impressions. Likewise, this continuing training addressed a very important matter in regard to the need for mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual support. For most of the areas mentioned here, I compiled a diverse databank from many sources which list books, videos, materials, websites, online classes, and more. This resource tool is included as Appendix D.

The present section focuses mainly on the existing support specific to our prison ministry as was made available to the volunteers.

**Mental**

Working with prisoners is fun, but also a challenge for many participants in prison ministry projects. Volunteer values may be different from those of the inmate, but he/she should accept them as individuals without condemning or condoning their behavior. To accept an inmate is to have a genuine interest in his/her future more than anything. Sometimes acceptance became a real conflict of interest. In this way the work of the volunteer with the inmates will be always under this pressure. The need to provide for ways to release that pressure in this ministry is very acute.

Therefore, one important mental support for the work team was a group support meeting once a month with the participation of the ministry participants: the pastor, volunteer church members, and a professional guest, which could be a social worker, counselor, medical doctor, a sociologist, etc. The guest was invited to have a short devotional and mainly to participate in the group dialogue, as they share their experience
and also, to address questions about the mental challenges participants face while they are working inside jails and prisons.

**Material**

Although most group prison ministries are operated by volunteers, there may be financial costs incurred. The population of a jail is not very stable and the materials given to the inmates need to be reoffered to every new attendee every other month. This includes soft cover Bibles, Bible studies, devotionals, song books, books, tracts, or other handouts approved by the institution.

Fortunately, as I mentioned earlier, I was assigned as the coordinator for Marion County’s jail ministry by the Marion County Ministerial Alliance. Most of the necessary funds for jail ministry were provided by the churches forming the Ministerial Alliance. Most of the churches actually located inside of the county perimeter were part of this Alliance. Besides the other projects they committed to assist, one was jail ministry.

Part of the equipment used for our programs inside the correctional facility, an overhead projector, video projector, musical instruments, song books, musical sound tracks, were also provided by those having an overflow in their churches. For example, we provided the video projector sponsored by one church member especially for this project. Also, the jail administration decided to be involved with some financial assistance, purchasing a guitar, a VHS/DVD player, a big screen TV, and few other things to be used and stored inside their facility. In preparing handouts for jail ministry, I asked a Christian local business owner if he would be willing to give us access to a photocopy machine. The owner agreed and made copies of all the materials we needed for jail and prison ministry.
One of the good news about jail and prison ministry is related to financial support usually needed and seriously considered by every new ministry initiated inside a church or nonprofit organization. Prison ministry, at least in the form we developed for the church in Salem, does not require any financial burden for the mother organization, or it will necessitate very little once started and people of the community, church members, and non-members, are invited to be part of this ministry. The community itself, including the ministerial alliance and local administration, will provide for most of the needs if we are committed to direct ministry to incarcerated people.

**Emotional and Spiritual**

Prison ministry is a challenging vocation that requires holistic preparation, flexibility and compassion. Because working in prison may stimulate and generate spiritual and emotional challenges, it is imperative to provide assistance for the group of volunteers working with jail and prison ministry. The childhood memories, traumas, and dangers we faced in the past make us vulnerable when we deal with similar situations. With the proper education, volunteer experience, emotional health, and mentoring, we may prepare to serve others in their needs. In this context it is important to develop a resourceful strategy and make it easily available for the people participating in jail and prison ministry.

A suggested guide for strengthening our emotional and spiritual muscles may include some of these recommendations:

1. Focus on your own spiritual development. Jail and prison ministry can be taxing on your spiritual life. You will see more pain, wrestle with more tragedies, face more bitter people, and deal with more internal conflicts than the average Christian.
Figure out how and when to regularly practice spiritual disciplines, such as prayer, meditation, scripture reading, and study.

2. Request other church members to always include the prison ministry team in their prayer list every week.

3. Be anxious to become educated in your domain. Don’t accept ignorance to control your life and ministry. Whether you take ministry courses and participate in growth and enrichment seminars, or take online classes in related area with your ministry, make education a priority in your life.

4. Start being active in jail and prison ministry. You do not have to wait to finish all the training in the world. Most of the time in jail and prison ministry we learn by doing. If you want to be a teacher in jail or prison but you don’t know how to do it, you may consider teaching a Sabbath school class and then practice your skills inside the correctional facilities.

5. Develop your emotional health. Once you start ministry, longevity of the ministry will depend on your emotional health and support. The emotional and spiritual pressure of prison ministry will be powerful. Read one or more of the books from the list of resources dealing with these topics found in Appendix D.

6. It will be the responsibility of the Prison Ministry Coordinator to provide the information of how to contact a licensed, well-trained counselor for guidance dealing with your emotional world. Find a mentor or two who have worked in prison ministry before, as well as loyal, dependable friends who will support you.

7. Experiment and practice to discover what you are gifted at and what you should avoid. Ask God for specific guidance about your specific calling and get in touch
with what you enjoy and what energizes you in prison ministry. It will be hard to sustain a ministry role that drains you and is not fulfilling for the long haul. Re-evaluate your skills and calling for jail and prison ministry every few years.

**The Immediate Results of Jail and Prison Ministry**

Jail and prison ministry bring together inmates, coordinators, and lay-workers in the study and ministry of God's Word. In a short time our ministry was able to start weekly in-house jail ministries that included religious services and Bible studies, an inmate correspondence network, distribution of Bibles and Christian books, and the showing of Christian DVD's.

**The Results in the Prison**

From the very beginning we found in jails and prisons a hungry population for knowing God’s loving heart. Of course, not every single inmate accepted our invitation to participate in our service, but their response to the Gospel invitation was encouraging to our volunteers. After the group of participant inmates grew to its maxim limits, we created a waiting list for those wanting to join our services when seats would be available. Many of the inmates expressed their desire to be baptized in the Christian faith and after a serious preparation, more than 40 were baptized. Some of them were released and decided to continue their spiritual journey and linked with different Christian groups around the state.

**The Results in the Church**

Positive comments from recent jail and prison ministry volunteers capture the joy and spiritual enthusiasm of this important church ministry. The qualitative and
quantitative growth of the local church is built on the personal growth of its members. Prison ministry offers unique, vital opportunities for personal spiritual growth because volunteers get personally involved, even immersed, in the gospel basics: witnessing, Bible teaching, counseling, worship, and encouragement. And when church members catch fire for the Lord, it won’t be long before the church grows.

One particular inmate, who was released after 25 years of incarceration, requested to be received as a member of our church in Salem. After counseling with my church officers and members, I rejoiced when the church accepted his request, trusted him, and invited him to be their brother. The person was able to purchase a house in the neighborhood, moved in and started attending the church services. After three years, the person continues to be fully committed to the Lord and to the church and is actively involved in church’s life and carries on his holistic recovery for God’s Kingdom.

Conclusion

Creating a culture for jail and prison ministry in the local church is a definite challenge. I certainly believe that the stages for implementing this project can offer a starting model for other churches and is always an opportunity for improvement. The effectiveness and outcomes of the implementation design for jail and prison ministry will be evaluated in the next chapter.
CHAPTER 5

FOUR-SESSION TRAINING

This section is the core of this case study project because it illustrates prison ministry as it was effectively implemented at the Adventist church of Salem, Illinois. The initial group of 10 people, who responded to the appeal to join the prison ministry team, planned to participate in the training sessions and agreed to seriously consider accepting the call for this ministry. The four-session training program started with a PowerPoint presentation (see Appendix C) where the participants received general information regarding prison ministry and the inmates who would be the direct beneficiaries of this ministry. The data presented included national and Illinois statistics about jail and prison facilities.

The second session was designed to offer an interactive dialogue, where the teacher and members started to plan and build a ministry personalized to their own situation as a team. They sought answers to the questions: Who? What? Where? When? Why? How? What are our options? What do we want to do? What is allowed and not allowed inside jail and prison? How to do it? How often? How long?

The third session was also interactive, where we developed the mission statement and the main goals of this ministry. During this session many details continued to be developed for the ministry project as the members continued to ask questions on the
topic. At the end of this third session, the team was excited to prepare for the last session which placed the participants in a new environment.

Finally, the last session was for team participation in an open house event I conducted inside the Marion County Jail facility. At this time, the team also participated in an orientation meeting with the jail administration to review the policies and rules that govern that county jail facility.

The present section includes specific details of each one of these four sessions and offers valuable information from the inside perspective of the training. The material contained in this chapter reduces the time required for research for anyone considering starting a prison ministry. Also, it enhances the reader’s ability to generate, use, and rearrange the particular information found here. This chapter focuses on the utilization of the available tools and human resources as the reader accepts the challenge to become part of any jail or prison ministry and go through an implementation process.

Issues covered in the training material include: PowerPoint Slides, Q&A, strategic framework, mission statement, dos and don’ts, little stories, feedback from volunteers, and the live experience of prison ministry.

Even though this chapter was not intended as such, it may function as a training manual for a church group that decides to be involved in jail and prison ministry.
First Session: What is Jail and Prison Ministry?

*Purpose of the session:* As an enlightening introduction to jail and prison ministry which helps participants to nurture an interest in prison ministry, this session was also planned to generate many questions. The feedback expressed by the participants was essential for the next session.

*Length of the session:* 2 hours

*Who participates:* This session was presented the day after preaching a sermon on Matt 25. Ten people responded to the call. Of the 10, only nine were present for the first training session. Three additional people participated in this session, making a total of 13 people including myself. Every individual of the group responding to the call to prison ministry was appreciated and considered essential for the future of the ministry.

*Materials:* The participants received hardcopy outlines of the PowerPoint presentation.

*Content:* The main presentation, a PowerPoint seminar, added to this document as Appendix C, is structured in a six-point outline:

Outline of the Seminar

**Justification for Doing Prison Ministry**

In this section I developed and presented three areas justifying the call for jail and prison ministry: 1. Biblical justification; 2. Spirit of Prophecy justification; and 3. Social justification. There are 126 references to prison and 229 references to captivity in the Bible taking away any doubt for those who may question if prison ministry is deeply rooted in Scripture.
Statistics About the Correctional System

Knowing the reality surrounding our community will give us a new perspective to examine prison ministry. California alone has more inmates than France, Great Britain, Germany, Japan, Singapore, and the Netherlands combined. Using the national statistics, we discover that the number of prisoners in the United States is higher than Russia and China together. So, according to the numbers, we realize we have a problem and avoiding that matter will not solve it, but only make it worst.

What Prison Ministry is all About

Sessions 2 and 3 address, improve, and broaden the concept of prison ministry. At this level the main ideologies guiding the vision were suggested for three areas: establish regular service, local church support of this ministry, and integration of the ministry in the community.

How to Start and Organize a Prison Ministry

Some preliminary suggestions were brought forward to stimulate the imagination and the enthusiasm of the participants for future interactive sessions and also for asking questions about prison ministry.

Qualifications and Characteristics for Doing Prison Ministry

The participants were very curious to find out if they qualified for this ministry. Three indispensable spiritual qualifications were presented alongside the six essential characteristics.
Issues and Challenges in Prison Ministry

Some of the prison ministry challenges were presented including vulnerability and security issues requiring thoughtful contemplation by people who responded to the call for prison ministry.

Questions and Answers

At the end, the participants were invited to express their concerns, opinions, and questions with regard to prison ministry. Most of the questions required very professional and thoughtfully prepared answers. While some of the questions were answered with short and easy responses, most of them set up the fundamentals for the next session. The second session of the prison ministry training was announced to take place the following week at the same day, time, and place.
Second Session: Answering the Commonly Asked Questions

Purpose of the Session: Without a detailed training manual, the best option chosen was to create our own resource handbook. We collected data and information from many other sources, compiled, and adapted them to our local context. The last item during the first training session, presented with the PowerPoint, was the Q&A section, these questions created the content of the second session.

Length of the Session: 2 hours

Who Participates: The participants decreased by one, so we started the session with a total of 12 participants, including myself.

Materials: The participants received the list of questions that had been raised during the previous session, as well as throughout the week.

Content: I collected the questions raised by the group during the last session and also during the week via email. As a result, 14 main questions emerged. I researched and prepared the answers, using this content as grounds for our brainstorming session.

Because we did not have a detailed training manual suitable for our context, I decided to produce an audio recording of the current Interactive Dialogue Seminar, as we covered each question. The actual content was offered in a hardcopy format to the participants during the third session in addition to a comprehensive list of the sources I used for preparing the four-session training. The report of this session includes a compilation of our brainstorming process in a Q&A format, as a custom tailored version of our own Jail and prison ministry manual.

The question is listed first, and then the answers we have researched and found acceptable for participants in the training program are written below the question.
According to my estimation, the core answers to these questions make prison ministry compatible and implementable for any Christian church regardless of its size or denomination.

Question 1: What are the Concrete Areas of Prison Ministry? Is Everyone Required to go Inside the Jail or Prison?

Even though jails and prisons are found in almost every community where many active believers are present, only a small number of supporters is involved in ministry to prisoners. While every believer should be involved in prison ministry, this does not necessarily mean that all members are called to actually go into a prison.

Many jails and prisons offer opportunities for group ministries to inmates. There is a large variety of group meetings to conduct in a prison: worship services, Bible studies, educational seminars, music classes (to train vocalists, musicians, or a choir for the prison worship services), musical and dramatic presentations, Christian writing, small groups offering a Christian approach to addiction and/or emotional problems, parenting classes, Bible college courses, discipleship classes for new believers, professional counseling, and more.

Nevertheless, for those who are not comfortable visiting jails and prisons, there are still many ways to be involved in this ministry without physically being present inside a correctional facility. Here are some examples:

1. Provide prayer support for prison ministries
2. Write to a prisoner
3. Assist the outside families of inmates
4. Help inmates’ transition back to society after their release
5. Send Bibles and Christian literature for inmates
6. Provide Bible correspondence courses

7. Provide financial support to a prison ministry

Question 2: What is a Prison Subculture? Can you List Some of the Most Notable Subcultures?

Every prison has its own personality. The strength of its subcultures depends on the peculiarity of its personality. This culture can be subdivided into subcultures, the notable of which are as follows:

*Code of Ethics:* The code of ethics among convicts is simply to mind your own business. Snitching on another inmate can be fatal.

*Con Games:* Con games are manipulative games that inmates play on staff, volunteers, and other inmates. All of these tactics are self-serving to the inmate.

*Commissaries:* These are stores that certain inmates operate out of their cells. Each inmate that owns and operates a commissary is in violation of the Department of Corrections’ Policy. Normally, inmates make between 75% and 100% profit on each item. Inmates keep their stores stocked by purchasing items from the prison commissary and reselling these items to the general population for twice the cost.

*Loan Sharks:* Loan sharks are inmates who make monetary loans to other inmates for high rates of interest. It is customary for a loan shark to get 100% or more for each loan he makes. Failure to payback a loan could result in some serious complications for the borrower.

*Homosexuality:* Homosexuality is sexual exchanges between members of the same sex which may be voluntary or involuntary. Many men and women are lured into traps that are set by more experienced inmates.
Games: Many games are played on new inmates who are ignorant of the inner workings of the system. Inmates give food and/or money to other inmates in return for sexual favors. Since January 2009, cigarettes are not part of the games anymore, because smoking is prohibited in any prison in the state of Illinois.

Gang Rape: An inmate is raped by several other inmates.

Drug Cultures: Drug dealers sell and supply the prison population with illegal drugs. Drugs in their purest forms are brought into prisons for inmates by employees, visitors, and in packages through the mail. There is no facility within the Department of Corrections anywhere in the world, that is immune from drug trafficking. Inmates have access to any drug that can be purchased in the community outside our jails and prisons.

Question 3: What is the Difference Between Jail and Prison? Are There Other Types of Detention Facilities?

Although jails and prisons are both houses for offenders, there are differences between the two. Prison inmates have been tried and convicted. Jail is usually the entry point for all prisoners. Many jail inmates haven't been convicted of anything yet. Most are being held pending trial. Some are being held pending sentencing. Some may be serving sentences so brief that it doesn't warrant sending them to a prison.

A prison population is relatively stable. There people serve longer terms so there is more time to work with them. A jail population is very transient. People are held in jails only while awaiting trial, sentencing, or serving brief sentences. Time with them is very limited.

Some prisons have at least a minimum number of facilities and programs for counseling and rehabilitation, but most jails have few or none. Prisons usually have better facilities for group meetings such as church services and group Bible studies. The
physical, emotional, and psychological conditions of jail inmates are different from and
less favorable than those in prisons. There is usually no privacy in which to talk with
individual inmates in jails. The prisoners in jails are often bored, restless, and fearful.

Most of all, uncertainty rules their lives.

Other types of programs for those confined include:

*Work release centers:* Inmates are allowed to hold a job in the community during
the day and return to the center for confinement at night.

*Halfway house:* Parolees are required to stay at a halfway house while seeking
employment and a permanent place to live. They may be required to complete certain
counseling or training programs offered at the halfway house.

*Road camp, fire camp, forestry camp, or work farm:* Inmates work on roads, fight
fires, or work on public forests or a farm.

*Detention, juvenile hall, or reformatory:* Typically for young offenders to be kept
separate from older prisoners.

Despite the distracting environment, jails, prisons, and other penal programs are
some of the greatest spiritual harvest fields in the world. Jesus only had a few minutes
with the dying thief on the cross, but his entire destiny was changed for all eternity.

Question 4: What are the Spiritual Qualifications for a Jail or Prison
Volunteer Worker?

*Courage.* Entering a jail or prison to minister, whether on a one-to-one or group
basis is outside the comfort zone for most believers. It is not unusual to feel a bit uneasy
the first few times in a penal facility, but remember, God will take care of you whenever
you are in His service. In most cases, the prison chapel is a safe place and inmates are
open and friendly. If you feel apprehensive, remember that God does not give a spirit of fear, so recognize where fear comes from and conquer it in the name of Jesus.

Cooperation. There are many different people in a prison society. As a volunteer, in addition to the inmates, you will primarily be involved with correctional officers (also called guards) and a chaplain or supervisor. Most people you meet will probably treat you with courtesy and respect. Be sure to treat them courteously, speaking to them, and shaking hands with them where appropriate, using their names when reasonably possible. A good prison ministry team worker knows how to cooperate with administration, other volunteers, and especially the chaplain, if the jail or prison has one. It is important for you, as a volunteer, to have some understanding of the work of jail and prison chaplains. Chaplains work long hours under difficult conditions. Each day chaplains must deal with many responsibilities such as the personal crises of inmates and providing programs to meet the spiritual needs of the inmates.

Most full-time jail and prison chaplains have more training and preparation for their work than do most ministers. Before they can be accepted into the prisons, they must have seminary training and be endorsed by their denominations. Often they are required to serve in a pastorate before entering chaplaincy. Chaplains must also be acceptable to the warden of the prison in which he/she is to work. A chaplain functions as the administrator of a religious program for the entire institution.

He/she provides for the traditional preaching and worship functions; oversees religious education programs; spends much time in personal counseling; recruits, trains and supervises volunteers; and performs many administrative activities (letters, meetings,
and reports). It is important for volunteers to maintain good relationships with the chaplain. If there is a problem, always talk with the chaplain first.

*Genuineness.* Be real. Inmates are expert at identifying charlatans. A person should not visit the prison with an inappropriate motive such as seeking a spouse or showing off his/her abilities. Prisoners are extremely perceptive. They quickly spot the person who joined the team out of curiosity.

*Humility.* It is crucial to maintain a humble spirit. Remember we are there to serve. Always submit yourself to those in authority (the chaplain, guards, and warden).

*Forgiving.* Foster a forgiving spirit, recognizing that, but for the grace of God, you could be in a similar situation. Realize that God's forgiveness extends to what society calls *psychopaths* and the *vilest of individuals*.

*Perseverance.* Society, friends, and family have given up on many inmates. They don't need someone else to reject them. Be patient. God has promised you will reap spiritual fruit in due season. Volunteers who start and then quit demoralize the inmate, disappoint the chaplain and the prison staff, and give a bad image to the efforts of the church.

*Faithfulness.* Be faithful, constant, and trustworthy in the performance of your duties, especially in keeping promises and being on time for appointments or services. The prison chaplain depends on you, as do the inmates. A visit, which may just be another in a long list of things you have to do, can be the highlight of an inmate's week. Don't disappoint them. Be faithful to this great privilege with which God has entrusted you. Commitment to be consistent and dependable is a top ranking quality valued by chaplains who work with volunteers.
Empathy. Empathy is the ability to feel what other people feel as though you were in their place. In the Old Testament, the prophet Ezekiel sat with the captives by the River Chebar before he shared God’s message to them. They were ready to listen because they knew he understood. He had “sat where they sat” (Ezekiel 1:1).

Mission Oriented. A sense of mission is a desire and a determination to give this work priority, a belief that you would rather be doing this than anything else in the world.

Spiritual Growth. You must not only lead inmates to new spiritual growth, but likewise you must be willing and anxious to grow. Spiritual growth is a lifelong process. If someone ever feels that he/she has “arrived” in either knowledge or virtue, this person simply shows a high degree of immaturity.

Emotional Maturity. It is important that volunteers handle their own emotions, such as anger, depression, feelings of being up one day, and down the next. Prison is a depressing place and inmates don't need more gloom and doom.

Love. The greatest motivational force behind any ministry, and especially prison ministry, is love: love for God, unconditional love for the inmate, and love for the mission to which God has called you.

Question 5: What are the Vital Areas of Preparation for Those who Desire to be Effective Prison Workers?

Prepare in prayer: As in every ministry, effective prison ministry is fueled by prayer. Here are some specific people to pray for: the chaplains of the institution, individual inmates, families of inmates, the warden and administrative staff, correctional officers, safety for prison volunteers entering the institution, parolees, and their spiritual and practical needs like jobs and housing, divine revelation and knowledge to meet the
needs of inmates, and spiritual revival for God to raise up strong spiritual leaders within the prison church body.

Also, an important part of the ministry is to pray for inmate prayer requests. Many prison chapels have a prayer request box. Inmates write out their requests and put them in the box for the chaplain and volunteers to pray specifically for their concerns.

Prepare in the Word: The prison volunteer should have a good working knowledge of the Bible and basic Christianity. Most inmates are not interested in the finer points of theology, but they do need a clear, understandable presentation of the Gospel. If you do not study and understand the Word, how can you help someone else learn to study and understand it? To be an effective prison worker, you must continually be studying God's Word.

Prepare for your specific responsibility: Prepare for your specific responsibility ahead of time. If you are to sing, have your sound track cued and ready. If you are to teach, spend adequate time preparing your lesson. If you are using video or audio equipment or an overhead projector, have these items ready.

Prepare yourself for the specific institution: Know the rules for dress and conduct of the specific institution. These vary from institution to institution. Know what you are allowed to take into the institution with you, get a general understanding of the ways in which acceptable Christian ministries can be carried out within that system, and attend training and orientation classes offered by the institution or chaplain.

Question 6: What is the Guideline to Communicate With Inmates in Jail or Prison?

The guideline of communicating with inmates is the same in principle as any respectful communication between two humans: face the speaker; listen to the speaker;
listen for ideas and underlying feelings; allow for your own bias; keep your mind on what the inmate is saying; make a conscious effort to evaluate the logic of what you hear; don’t judge ideas by the inmate’s appearance or delivery; don’t interrupt immediately if you think a statement is wrong; let Christ, who is the answer, have the last word, not yourself; and don’t judge the inmate’s motives.

Since communication is not only verbal, learning some visitation strategies is important for the prison ministry volunteer:

1. Go through proper channels to be approved by the institution as a visitor. You may have to fill out certain forms, be pre-approved before your first visit, carry a specific type of identification, etc.

2. Learn and abide by all rules for personal visitation in the institution you visit. Rules may include issues like days and hours for visitation, appropriate dress, safety, and dress codes. They usually govern what can and cannot be taken into the institution. Many jails and prisons have their rules in writing. Ask for them.

3. It is best to visit one-on-one with a person of the same sex. This avoids the pitfalls of improper romantic relationships.

4. Normally, it is best not to give money to an inmate or their family. If you believe there is a legitimate need and you really believe God is directing you to do this, it is best to channel your help anonymously through the chaplain or another contact in the institution.

5. If you forge a real friendship with an inmate, it will be easier to discuss spiritual matters and share the Gospel with them. Don't preach or lecture. Ask God to show you how to share His love and the Word of God in a way that will be accepted.
After an inmate becomes a believer, continue to disciple him in the Word of God. If the institution permits, give a Bible and discipleship literature to your friend. Depending on institutional rules, you may be allowed to send these items through the mail, take them in yourself, or give materials to the chaplain to deliver.

6. Unless you have had training in the area of personal counseling, don't assume this role in the relationship. You are there as a friend. Don't feel you must give an answer to every issue raised. As in any friendship, be a good confidant. Keep personal information shared by your special friend confidential.

7. Prison is an impersonal, dehumanizing place and an inmate doesn't have much opportunity to receive individual attention. Make your friend feel special. Make your visits a positive, uplifting, fun time.

8. Always remember you are there as a representative of the Lord Jesus Christ but don't spend all your time on spiritual matters. Foster a balanced relationship, just as you do with your own friends. Discuss current events, laugh together, and have fun with your friend.

Question 7: What Does a Worship Service Looks Like in Jail or Prison?

1. A general weekend church service in a prison operates somewhat like any service of worship in a local church. These services are usually interdenominational, so you should not emphasize the doctrinal distinctiveness of your denomination, unless you have very precise questions asked by inmates as the result of studying the Bible. There is a wealth of scriptural material that you can use without having to go into areas on which different denominations disagree. The members of the Christian community in most prisons get along with each other much better than those on the outside, and many
consider the service to be their church. You are considered a welcomed visiting minister. However, when you enter the jail or prison to minister for an already established denominational group belonging to your church, you are expected to present your church views and understanding of the Gospel.

2. Many members of our church may not become regulars in prison ministry, but they will make occasional visits to deliver a program in their special area. For example, youth and adult musicians can offer special music and visitors can show slides or travel programs on the Holy Land or other places they have visited.

3. Always greet the inmates on the way in, shaking hands, if possible, and thanking them for coming to the service. Your genuine greeting and focus on the people you are visiting is important for their confidence in and acceptance of you. Follow the accepted custom of the facility when handing out whatever literature you may have, such as tracts, devotional guides, and magazines. Before bringing anything, make sure the material is allowed, and that you have enough copies for everyone. Treat all equally and as extended congregational members.

Question 8: What Would be the Responsibilities of the Prison Ministry Team Members?

Coordinator ensures compatible people work together, meets with the warden, prison chaplain, volunteer coordinator, or jail superintendent and acts as liaison between the local church and the prison administration.

Prison Counselor Leader implements the prison ministry program that has been agreed upon, evaluates the workers’ progress, and reports the work of the ministry to the Prison Ministry Coordinator, plans weekly programs and supervises and adheres to all correctional facility policies.
Health and Welfare Secretary works directly with the Community Services Director of the church in supplying the needs of inmates and their families and once per year, or when it is necessary, coordinates the collection of personal hygiene products to be donated to the county jail/prison inmates.

Literature Secretary keeps track of and reports to the church: the distribution of Bibles, Bible lessons, literature, and the number of persons studying God’s Word, keeps record of visits to the inmate and his/her family, and reviews their needs with the Prison Ministries Coordinator.

Song Leader selects songs that will bring hope, joy, and encouragement, leads the service song and teaches inmates new songs every time when the opportunities arise. Also he/she takes requests for songs from the group and has a deep understanding of the different worldviews represented by the diversity of prisoners.

Lay Preacher/Bible Instructor/Teacher should be two or more people. Should be good Bible students, must have a broad understanding of spirituality, should try to relate to the inmates on their level, and should never talk down to the inmate. Also he/she should relate to the inmate as an equal, should encourage class participation rather than present a lecture-type class, and must always be in control of the class. Whenever possible, the circle seating arrangement should facilitate group interaction and also is very important to be sensitive to cross-cultural issues, especially those specific to jail and prison facilities.

Question 9: How to Conduct a Group Meeting

The general guidelines for conducting group services in a jail or prison are similar to the guidelines used for conducting services in church.
**Timing:** Correctional institutions are run on a strict schedule. All group meetings should begin and end on time.

**Music:** Music for worship services in prison should be encouraging and uplifting. Songs that could be misunderstood by residents as condemning or as a put down should not be used, for example, *Rescue the perishing.* If you are using projectors, overheads transparencies, song books, or sound tracks, have these items ready. Always receive clearance from the chaplain before arranging musical activities which are different from that which your team normally does (special groups, cantatas, etc.).

**Prayer:** Keep prayers short and to the point. A lengthy prayer could not only make the worship monotonous but could be misunderstood by the prisoners as saying, “These people need long prayers.” No particular position or posture is important, but when there is a large crowd (50 or more), it would be advisable to leave the congregation seated or standing while offering prayer rather than calling them forward to kneel.

Spend most of the time praying for the physical, social, mental, and spiritual welfare of inmates, their concerns, and those relating to their families. Pray also for institutional staff. It is okay to keep your eyes open a bit (or have a member of your team designated to keep their eyes open) for control purposes.

**Scripture reading:** The person reading the Scripture during a worship service is *echoing* the voice of God and setting the tone for the sermon or lesson. Have the text read with expression, reverence, and impressiveness (Neh 8:8). Announce clearly, before beginning to read, where the Scripture is located (book, chapter, and verses). Allow time for those who have Bibles to find the passage. Project your voice to those in the back of the room. Stand upright and speak clearly.
**Testimonies:** If you are asked to give a testimony, do not view this as your golden opportunity to preach. Do not use denominational jargon such as, “Since I came into the message,” “After I accepted the truth,” or “Accepting righteousness by faith.” It is better to use such phrases as “Since I became a Christian,” “After I accepted Jesus Christ as my personal Savior,” or “Accepting the forgiveness of God given to the sinner.” Keep your testimony Christ-centered and follow the ABC’s of testifying:

A. Always tell what Christ has done for you and/or your family, telling things that are relevant to strengthening the faith of the prisoners. Don't glamorize sin by telling explicit details.

B. Be sure to keep it as short as possible, preferably 2-3 minutes. Don't try to tell it all. Remember that you are working in a scheduled time frame. The more you talk, the less time the speaker will have to deliver the Word.

C. Check your volume. Speak clearly and loudly, especially if no microphone is available, so you are heard and understood by all.

**Preaching or teaching:** Messages prepared for preaching or teaching in a prison should not be very long. Many inmates have a limited attention span. You also want to leave time enough at the end of your message so that you can conclude things properly and visit awhile with the residents. Make your messages relevant to inmates. Adjust your presentation to what you know about your audience. Character building and motivational messages are always good. When making a point about wrongdoing, always use *we* to include yourself.

The following things should never be said in a message: Never scold the residents. Enough of this has been received from relatives, lawyers, judges, and others.
Never make statements that can be misinterpreted by prison staff as a breach of security. Never downgrade other religions. Never present a holier than thou attitude. Never ask antagonistic questions or assume the group disagrees with you.

It is very important for the entire team to build a trust relationship during the service by knowing and using some universal values of dialogue and communication. In small groups, wherever possible, use a circular seating arrangement and encourage class participation. The question and answer method is effective. Don't let one person dominate the conversation. Make sure everyone has a Bible and encourage them to read along. If you have to eject a disruptive student from a group, be tactful and courteous, but be firm. If necessary, get the cooperation of a correctional officer.

If you ask for response from the group at the end of a message—to accept Christ as Savior or to rededicate their lives—be very clear about exactly what you want them to do and why. If you have a large group, it is best to have them raise their hands rather than come forward.

*Inmate participation:* Encourage inmates to be part of the service, but never ask them to lead the service. For example, have an inmate sing a solo or share his/her testimony. Exercise caution with regard to the content and length of inmate participation. Keep in mind that you are working within a set time frame and you can allow only a minimum amount of resident participation at each service. If necessary, have a waiting list.

*Follow-up:* Inmates, who indicate their acceptance of Jesus Christ as their personal Savior during an appeal at the close of a group meeting or at any other time, should receive follow-up care while still in the institution. If possible, their names should
be secured and one copy given to the chaplain and another retained for you to follow up. If the institution provides a way for them to be baptized in water, they should receive instruction on this and opportunity to do so. New converts will be like young children taking their first spiritual steps. Most of the time, their environment will be alien and opposed to their new beliefs. Constant support, encouragement, and prayer are needed. They should be encouraged to continue regular attendance at worship services and Bible study sessions. Also, they should be encouraged to develop friendships with other Christians within and without the institution. You may want to assign a spiritual buddy to each new convert. This person will visit and/or write the resident regularly, as well as keep in touch after his/her release from prison. If the prisoner with whom you are working is transferred to another institution, the spiritual buddy can continue to write and provide encouragement and spiritual guidance.

**Entering and exiting the room:** It is important, especially in large groups, to have established procedures for entering and exiting the room to keep things orderly. Some institutions require inmates to sign in so there is a record of their participation. Assign some inmates to remain behind and put the room back in order: erase boards, secure equipment, put up materials, pick up trash, and straighten chairs and tables.

**Question 10: How to Conduct a Bible Study Class in Jail or Prison**

Regular classes for Scripture study offer a great opportunity to minister to inmates. While the prison administrator may have limits on study groups, not every prison ministry is interested in leading regular classes. The good news is that most of the inmates attending a Bible class are typically seriously interested in studying the Scripture.

The following points should be considered in conducting the Bible study:
Always begin with prayer, usually by the teacher or the assistant. The inmate should be encouraged to give the closing prayer. When beginning a study group, have an agreement between the lay Bible teacher and the inmates as to: the resource book (Bible translation), the number of lessons, the time period for each lesson, the manner in which the study is to be given, and the reciprocal courtesy to be expected by both the lay Bible instructor and the inmates.

Time is of essence in a correctional institution. There is always a strict schedule. Therefore, it is important to remember that the teacher must keep the study within the prescribed time limits. The Bible study should average anywhere from 30-45 minutes, one hour being the maximum time limit. Always stick to the lesson under consideration:

1. Bible teacher should focus on the topic, but sometimes be ready to handle other questions whether they may be related to the topic or not.
2. Bible teacher should not ignore nor be discourteous to the inmate.
3. The teacher should handle any inmate, who deliberately attempts to disrupt the class or test the teacher, with patience and courtesy.
4. In a difficult situation, prayer is the best remedy.
5. Do not get in an argument over the lesson. It is better to lose an argument and win a soul for Christ.

Question 11: Can we be Involved in Prison Ministry by Writing Letters to Inmates? Are There any Rules to Follow for Doing This Part of the Ministry?

Writing letters is a great ministry and is usually known as a Pen-Pal program. Most of the inmates, once in prison, lose their connections, and after few years of
detention, their friends and families give up on them. However, knowing certain rules offer safety and security to the participants in the ministry.

In corresponding with the inmates, avoid asking about reasons for their incarceration. If they volunteer to offer such information, you may feel that trust has begun to develop. Ask questions about prison and prison life so that you can better understand.

Refrain from using words such as dear. Cross-gender letters run the largest risk of misinterpretation, so this is an area where great caution should be used. Make sure your friend understands from the beginning that you are corresponding only for Christian encouragement. If it becomes clear that the inmate has misinterpreted your intentions, it is usually best to discontinue the correspondence.

As a general guide for writing letters to the jail or in prison, it is important to remember these rules:

1. Don’t give your home address, your last name, or your phone number. Have your letters mailed to the church or a post office box number.
2. Be careful in your communication; you don’t want to give the wrong impression to the inmate. Don’t become intimate and romantic through letter writing; the inmate may test you.
3. Don’t preach to the inmate in your correspondence.
4. Don’t send money, clothing, or personal items; the inmate may try to take advantage of the friendship.
5. Don’t send literature without consulting the Chaplain.
6. Don’t provide any information about yourself or other members of your family. Do not write about your problems. Prisoners have enough problems of their own.

7. Point the person to Christ and other positive ideas and values.

8. Be kind, courteous, and cordial in your correspondence.

9. Try to be positive in your writing. Share personal testimonies of what Jesus has done and is doing in your life.

10. Share Bible promises.

11. Sometimes inmates get transferred or paroled without warning. The prison will usually return your letter rather than forwarding it. You can search the inmate locator of the state for an inmate and where he or she was transferred to by accessing this page: http://www.idoc.state.il.us/subsections/search/ISdefault2.asp

12. You may send self-addressed envelopes with imprinted stamps if you wish, since many inmates cannot afford stamps. Do not, however, send stamps or envelopes with adhesive stamps on them. Most prisons do not allow these.

13. Anything you send to your pen friend must have the prisoner number on it or it will not get through to the inmate.

14. If you want to send your friend a little birthday or Christmas gift, a small money order is often allowed. However, cash and checks are never allowed.

   The bottom line is that inmates feel lonely because they are alienated from society, friends, and family. A letter coming in the mail is not always good news, especially when it contains a divorce paper or a sad notice about a death in the family. However, letters from the people involved in prison ministry have always encouraged
many people in prison. A week without a letter can seem like a year, so write often and respond promptly. One prisoner is reported to have called mail “paper sunshine.”

Question 12: What are the Jail or Prison Volunteers’ DON’Ts and DOs Rules?

It is important to know ahead of time what we are allowed to do and not do. Ignorance is not an excuse for volunteer workers in jail or prison. Potential mistakes can affect the entire ministry team negatively, including the right to visit the inmates.

These are the DON’Ts:

1. Don’t develop any financial friendship with residents and don’t commit to bringing or sending them money.
2. Don’t give out phone numbers and addresses indiscriminately.
3. Don’t let calls and letter writing become uncontrollable. Collect phone calls from jails or prison are costly compared with regular calls.
4. Don’t expect to be well received if confronting the administration about rules and policies.
5. Don’t talk to one resident about another. This can cause a fight.
6. Don’t be shocked, scared, or intimated by what you hear in prison.
7. Don’t bring handbags, wallets, or full key rings into the prison.
8. Don’t bring drugs or medication into the prison.
9. Don’t expect to enter the prison at times other than scheduled activities. Don’t attempt to bring books, letters, pictures, or food into the prison without permission.
10. Don’t wear shorts, see-through clothes, low-cut dresses, tank tops, or sun dresses into the prison.

These are the DOs:
1. Take the time to develop trust. A volunteer may be the one person a resident will trust.

2. Take problems, complaints, and questions to the program coordinator if the group or individual with whom you work is unable to help you.

3. Listen to problems, offer suggestions if solicited, and respect confidentiality.

4. Leave money at home or locked up in your car. Sometimes $10.00 in change is permitted but only during one-on-one visitation.

5. Bring just your ID, volunteer card, and necessary keys (i.e., car door key).

6. Written permission is required for any new materials. Notify the program sponsor for approval.

7. Women must wear bras and panties (with or without pantyhose).

8. Follow the orders or directives given by security personnel and do not attempt to wander around the prison. A tour of the prison can be arranged through an institutional administrator. If questions arise during an activity, always ask the coordinator to clarify those questions.

9. Follow the dress code and be aware that there are people in prison who perceive normal gestures as an advance.

10. Accept what is said without being judgmental.

11. A great deal of good can be accomplished in prisons. Volunteers will find that much can be taught and learned as they become accustomed to their roles. However, a great deal of damage can be done as well. Here are some additional points for volunteers:


15. Be willing to confront manipulative behavior.

**Question 13: Are There any Dress and Safety Codes?**

Each jail and prison usually has a dress code that applies to their specific institution. For example, some institutions prohibit volunteers and visitors from wearing colors that resemble inmate or guard uniforms. Do not wear tight, form fitting clothing or low cut necklines. Avoid t-shirts with emblems and slogans as an outer garment and wear no gang-related attire. Do not wear see-through, revealing clothing, or shorts. Also, women should avoid clothing that reveal underwear straps and dresses or skirts should fall below the knee.

Be sure to ask about the rules for the specific institution you are visiting. Generally speaking, wear dress that is appropriate in the business world. Volunteers of the prison ministry are on business for the King of Kings.

**Question 14: What are the Final Safety Rules and Regulations?**

Adherence to the rules will insure and make your ministry effective. Learn and obey all the rules at your local institution. Here are some general codes:

1. Leave the following at home or in your car: purses, wallets, briefcases, money, and non-essentials.
2. Always carry identification. Many institutions insist on your identification having a photo.
3. Be prepared to submit to a search at any time.
4. Meet and arrive together if you are coming to minister as a group. Some institutions will escort you to your destination.
5. Always consult the chaplain or a staff member when in doubt. Do not assume anything.

6. If you are ministering in a group, keep your eyes on each other, especially while entering and exiting the institution.

7. Never run in the institution. Running usually indicates that someone is being chased or is chasing someone. It is usually perceived as a danger signal.

8. Learn your way around the institution. Do not enter any restricted areas. Always walk on the sidewalks. Do not take short cuts (they could lead to danger).

9. Know emergency procedures. Some institutions have alarms in the meeting rooms or give personal alarms or whistles to volunteers. You are expected to obey an officer when an order, command, direction, or instruction is given. This is for your protection and the security of the institution. If you can't be an asset during an emergency, get out of the way. In the event of an emergency situation that affects a significant portion of the inmate population at an institution, the visiting program and other activities may be suspended.

10. In the event of a medical emergency with an inmate, know the procedure for summoning medical aid.

11. Do not take any contraband items into an institution. These obviously include drugs, explosives, alcohol, and weapons. Be sure to ask what is permissible to take in with you.

12. Never take cameras or tape recorders onto prison grounds without permission.

13. If you are given keys, keep them on you at all times. Do not lay them down anywhere. If you are responsible for closing up a room and locking it, be sure to search
the room before doing so. Check store rooms, under desks, corners, and bathrooms. Be sure it is empty.

14. Officers assigned to entrances, exits, and gates are responsible for identifying you and for searching any car, package, purse, or briefcase that passes through. When the officer at the gate is processing a visitor or inmates, do not interrupt him.

15. Many institutions issue an identification badge or card to volunteers. Be sure to wear or carry this with you at all times on institutional grounds.

This long session of training provided the resources of our own Jail and Prison Ministry Manual and it will be supplied for future reference to every new team member joining this ministry. The next session, the third, of the prison ministry training was announced to take place the following week on the same day, time, and place.

**Third Session: Building a Strategic Framework**

*Purpose of the Session:* Writing the mission statement and setting the goals for jail and prison ministry in our local church was the main objective for this third training session.

*Length of the Session:* 2 hours

*Who participates:* The number of the participants remained constant compared with the last session, which meant a total of 12, including myself.

*Materials:* The content of the last session was offered in a hardcopy format to the participants, along with a comprehensive listing of the sources I used for preparing the entire training.

*Content:* In order to set a stable solid foundation for the ministry, it was essential to start answering three key questions:
1. What are the opportunities or essentials that we presume to address (the purpose of the ministry)?

2. How are we going to address these needs (the organization of the ministry)?

3. What principles and beliefs guide our work (the values of the ministry)?

Mission Statement

Since this session was envisioned as an interactive teaching seminar, I facilitated the process by guiding the group members to define in their own terms their vision and long term desires in regard to prison ministry. After constructive dialogue, the purpose of starting a jail and prison ministry in Salem church was summed up in the following mission statement voted by all 12 participants:

Our jail and prison ministry is purposely intended to edify those who are presently, or formerly imprisoned in the correctional facilities in our geographical area. We have committed to impart God’s love to physical and spiritual inmates and to spend ourselves in this ministry as we share with them the Hope for a better life with Jesus.

The Prison Ministry Team reviewed and improved this primary mission statement. After achieving the goal of writing the mission statement, we voted to complete the list of details that are essential for adapting and making the prison ministry fully functional in our context.

Ten Main Goals of Salem Prison Ministry

We set 10 goals, reserving the right to adjust them after we identified different needs and new ways to fulfill these needs:

1. Share the unconditional love of God
2. Encourage those in prison
3. Provide a link between the community and persons confined in jail and prison
4. Prepare residents for re-entry into society: physically, mentally, morally, and spiritually
5. Mentor, disciple, and challenge inmates to grow spiritually
6. Facilitate prayer and Bible study in jail and prison
7. Offer books and video presentations to the inmates
8. Fulfill the church’s need for an efficient community outreach project
9. Give the members of the local church the taste of a real mission field
10. Enlarge the core group sharing the results of our ministry with people of our community, regardless of their denominational affiliation

The specific goal of the ministry was active participation inside and outside of the jail and prison locations available in the area. While not every participant expressed their decision to be part of a team ministering inside a correctional facility, I was impressed regarding their commitment to be part of this ministry.

Prison Ministry Strategic Planning

A group of four people decided to form a Pen-Pal group ministry writing letters to the inmates of the Marion County Jail and to the long-term inmates from the Big Muddy River State Prison. A list containing the names and addresses of those inmates who expressed their desire to develop a friendly relationship with a person outside the prison system was provided by the teams working inside the respective correctional facilities.

Two other participants preferred to form a little cell for visiting individual inmates face-to-face and once per month to reserve a full afternoon for visiting especially those who never received a visit or a card for more than five years. The names were provided by those working inside the prison and also as a result of the Pen-Pal group ministry. It
was agreed that before the inmate could list the visitor on his guest list, the name would be cleared with the prison chaplain, who could offer any recommendations and/or advice for any of the selected names.

Six of the participants, including myself, opted to form a group ministry for entering the jail and prison for the purpose of holding a weekend religious service and two Bible study classes for women and men on Tuesday at the Marion County Jail, and also adding a Wednesday evening opportunity for teaching a choir class for the Big Muddy State Prison. Since I already served as Jail Ministry Coordinator and volunteer for Illinois state prisons, I offered the available information and worked with the group to fill in the opening we had at that time. Once started, more openings became available and we had the flexibility to adjust the schedule according to our availability. Every one of the planned services was designed for one hour, except the choir seminar, which was two hours long, the second hour to be spent for actual choral practice.

Because the weekend religious service in jail was in many ways similar to a religious service in the church, the church elder present in the group from the very beginning was asked and empowered to take the lay preacher responsibility and prison counselor leader position as well. He was responsible for implementing the prison ministry program that we agreed upon, evaluating the progress of the volunteer workers, and for reporting to the prison ministry coordinator. Because I was involved in the prison system already, I accepted the role of temporarily coordinating this ministry for no more than six months, assisting the group until eventually it was less dependent on my presence.
A notable participant on the prison ministry team was a 91-year-old church member. This lady taught the Bible class for the women inmates at the Marion County Jail. She was a real example and inspiration for the younger volunteers participating in the ministry. Very soon she became the most respected volunteer in jail ministry and her picture appeared on the front page of the local newspaper that featured an extensive interview about this ministry. She became highly appreciated and respected across denominational lines around the county of Salem for her passion and love for inmates. She was active in this ministry for four years, after which she decided to continue her ministry by only writing letters to prisoners.

One member of the group that decided to enter the jail facility was recommended to the position of literature secretary, which was responsible for keeping track of and then reporting to the church how many Bibles, lessons, and other literature were distributed in the prison. This position also keeps record of the visits to the inmates, their attendance at the church service, Bible study class, or at one-to-one visitations.

Another person who joined the inside visitation group was the head deaconess of the church, who accepted the role of greeting and encouraging inmates during the religious services and Bible classes. She envisioned her role as that of identifying those who were going through a difficult time, becoming friends with them, hugging them, and praying with them for their needs. She implemented a one-to-one ministry during the group services.

Finally, the sixth person of the group ministering inside jail and prison was a skilled musician, who was unanimously recommended and accepted to serve on the team as song leader. This person was responsible for selecting songs, leading the song service,
and teaching inmates new songs every time the opportunity arose. This person was to take requests for songs from the inmates, and also arrange for outside groups or singers to visit from time to time and to arrange special musical programs.

The support for this ministry in its holistic view, including logistic, emotional, mental, or spiritual sustenance, was discussed after the fourth training session.

At the end of this session, I gave all participants in this training a confidential form to be filled out with their personal information. Entrance into the Marion County Jail and/or Illinois state prison requires approval and a background check. An instant background check would fulfill the requirements for county jail, but the state requires an extensive background check that would take between 3-6 months. No background check is necessary for writing letters to the inmates.

The last session of the prison ministry training, the fourth one, concluded the preliminary training of the group before the official starting of the ministry on the selected launch date, exactly one week from the last training session. However, the time of the meeting was in the morning. Since the church was located only one mile from the Marion County Jail, the entire group decided to meet at our church location half an hour before the time of the open house event for preparation and prayer. One person asked if it would be appropriate to bring some cookies and sweet treats for inmate during the open house initiation occasion. I promised to check with jail administration and report to the team on Tuesday evening after the prayer meeting. Also, the Prison Counselor Leader made sure that posters with the event were printed and given to the jail administration to announce the open house to the entire inmate population. We dismissed the session with
a circle of prayer. The enthusiasm of the people involved was high as they anticipated the real life event.
Fourth Session: Project Implementation

Location: The Marion County Jail

Purpose of the Session: The implementation of the prison ministry created an atmosphere of authenticity and a fulfillment of the entire training session program. Also, it represented a step forward in enlarging the local church territory for effective ministry and made more tangible the distant goal of operational community outreach.

Length of the Session: 2 hours

Who Participated: Out of the 12, only eight planned to actually participate in the open house event at the Marion County Jail.

Materials: No materials were needed for this session. The participants were reminded to wear appropriate dress as they prepared for the first visit to Marion County Jail.

Content: Nevertheless, visiting at a jail or prison can be tormenting and confusing, especially when visiting for the first time. The good news about this last session of the training seminar was that none of the entire team involved in prison ministry was turned down by the background investigation process. Also, the jail administration allowed us to bring cookies and sweets for inmates during the first official meeting of the prison ministry group inside the correctional facility.

The Visit

We started the session with an early meeting at our church location. A group of people, larger than the group who participated for training, came for the little prayer meeting as we made the last preparations for entering the jail. I told the participants to be ready, if comfortable, to help me with little items during the religious service. I asked
them to use their life-long Christian training and greet inmates, shaking their hands, and being free to talk with them if the opportunity arose. After receiving the blessings of the larger group, we drove one mile and parked our cars in the Marion County parking lot.

Fifteen minutes before the start time, we were admitted to the gym/hall as we started to prepare for the actual meeting. Inside the gym the temperature was a little low, but the duty officer was able to adjust it for us. It was important to develop a personal relationship with the guards. They had the power to help you have a good service and also, they had the choice to let you deal with the problems without giving you the needed help. I asked my team to help with setting up the projector, arranging the chairs, readying some handouts to be given out during the service, having Bibles available for those who came for the first time, and making sure that they found comfortable places to observe how a religious service was conducted in jail.

The main door of the gym opened exactly on time and one by one, the inmates were led inside to participate in the service. On that particular day we had the pleasant surprise of counting more than 50 inmates, a very high number, knowing the total population of Marion County Jail was an average of about 100 inmates. Of the 100 individuals, most of them would be replaced by others in about two months. Because we planned a little social time when the inmates could enjoy the cookies we brought, we visited with each other for the first 15 minutes. During this time slot, I introduced the members of the prison ministry team and reiterated the information that was already on the posters that showed the days and the type of programming the residents of the jail might want to participate in starting the next week.
Our team members were well accepted and already they started to create connections that were used later during the ministry. A couple of volunteers from our team were greatly surprised to find several people they knew from their community in jail. The bonding between them was almost instantaneous.

To make a smooth transition between the social and the religious portions of our meeting, I invited the inmates to sing a couple of songs that we already knew from the previous week. Since I was acting as the Jail Ministry Coordinator already, I accepted to cover the weekend service some months before until I could find a ministry team to take over the program. The two songs used for this occasion were *Power in the blood* and *Above all*. These were two of the favorite songs of the prisoners at each place.

After the song service, I invited all the participants to join in the collective supplication by reciting the *Lord’s prayer* as an opening supplication for our service.

The next item was the Scripture reading, a passage from the Gospel, as a preparation for the following interactive sermon. Before the sermon, I asked the members of the team to help me distribute the outline and pencils for those who liked to keep notes of the presentation. Also, my wife was able to offer a special musical selection, as she played her violin.

Most of the time when I am in jail or prison leading a religious service, I prefer an interactive study that keeps the inmates fully involved in the topic. For that particular day, the topic prepared for discussion was *The Power of Forgiveness*. After illustrations that brought a Bible passage to life in people’s minds, I structured the entire message into three questions and asked the participants to give me their feedback to those questions. This is the time when everyone wanted to say something, but I made sure that everyone
spoke in turn, and I always acknowledged each one by name. After 15 minutes or so, I started to summarize some of their answers and put them in a logical and hermeneutical order, making sure that they filled in the outline guide. Then I presented the summary of our findings in the Bible passage.

Now the inmates started to ask questions, not only about the present topic, but questions from many areas of life. Before answering some of these questions, I invited them to bring up prayer requests and then I closed the service with prayer. After this I answered some of their questions, freely admitting that I didn’t know the answer for some of the questions either. I promised I would prepare myself for another time. Likewise I invited the inmates to direct questions to the other members of the team, as well. We still had five minutes until the end of our service.

At exactly one hour the guards came and invited the inmates to start going back to their blocks. Some inmates volunteered to help our team pile up the chairs and remove all the informational leaflets and pamphlets used during the service and stored them in the service room on one side of the gym. After 1 hour and 30 minutes, we were back in the parking lot, ready to discuss our feedback and anxious to come back the following week for another service.

At this point, the whole team understood that the official jail and prison ministry of the Salem Seventh-day Adventist Church was launched and by God’s power and grace would continue until His second coming.
CHAPTER 6

EVALUATION AND OUTCOMES

Introduction

In this final chapter I describe the outcome of the implementation of the jail and prison ministry in the Salem Seventh-day Adventist Church and the influence of this ministry on the spiritual satisfaction of the volunteers who elected to participate in the program. First, the evaluation was based on a survey administered to the members of the Salem church in 2012, about four years after the implementation of the jail and prison ministry project. Then I provide a personal pastoral perspective of this ministry task, where I evaluate the overall spiritual impact of this ministry for the entire church based on my dialogue with church members who joined the prison ministry and those who did not.

The second half of this chapter explains how the jail and prison ministry is applicable to other churches. In this context, I mention the 10 key aspects of prison ministry and some limitations of the ministry according to my personal evaluation of this ministry. I conclude with some final recommendations.

Survey of the Local Church

In October 2012, I developed a survey of 10 questions to evaluate the impact of the jail and prison ministry in the Salem Adventist Church. The survey was given to a volunteer group of members. Twelve people from the Salem church took the survey,
including five members who did not participate in the jail and prison ministry project. The survey assessed the spiritual satisfaction of the church members, based on two essential values of the Christianity: evangelism and community outreach. Eight of the 10 questions were scored on a scale of agreement with the statement: *Always, Frequent, Occasionally, Seldom, or Never*. One question asking, “How satisfied are you with your spiritual life?” was scored on a similar scale of agreement, but was a little more specific: *Very Satisfied, Satisfied, Neutral, Unsatisfied, or Very Unsatisfied*. Finally, the one remaining question required an answer of “Yes” or “No” if the person was participating or had participated in the jail and prison ministry. The entire survey is included (see Appendix E).

I list the 10 questions of the survey and then I indicate the results of the assessment.

1. “I share my faith in Christ with non-believers neighbors and friends.” Most of the participants in the jail and prison ministry selected the *Frequent* answer and above, while those who did not participate in the program selected *Seldom* and *Occasionally*.

2. “I regularly pray for non-believers I know.” Most of the non-participants responded with *Occasionally* while for the jail ministry participants this was one of two questions that scored nearer to the highest option *Always*.

3. “I intentionally maintain relationships with non-believers after I shared my testimony.” This was the question where the group of non-participants scored the lowest, alternating their answers between *Never* and *Seldom* while the participants selected mainly *Frequent*. 

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4. “I serve others, expecting nothing in return.” This was the question where almost all participants in the survey scored highest marking Always. It was the highest average for the both groups, regardless if they were involved or not in prison ministry.

5. “How satisfied are you with your spiritual life?” This was the question where the participants in the jail and prison ministry scored lower, between Neutral and “Satisfied,” but still higher than the non-participants who scored between Unsatisfied and Neutral.

6. “I am participating or have participated in jail or prison ministry.” Out of 12 participants in this survey, seven of them were involved in the jail and prison ministry while the other five were not. The next four questions only applied to those answering with “Yes” to this sixth question.

7. “I am involved in jail or prison ministry at my church or in affiliation with any other organization.” Only two of the seven opted to answer Occasionally while the others revealed that they are Frequent involved in jail or prison ministry.

8. “Meeting with inmates and ministering to them provides a sense of purpose in my life.” Most of the respondents affirmed that ministering to inmates provided a sense of purpose in their life, as they marked Frequent.

9. “I encourage my church and friends to participate and/or support jail and prison ministry.” It was interesting to see that every one of the seven people answering this question has a high esteem for the jail and prison ministry since they recommended it to others, Frequent and Always.

10. “While participating in a jail and prison ministry, I am satisfied with my spiritual life.” This last question is very similar to the fifth question assessing the
satisfaction of the spiritual life, but this time in the context of jail and prison ministry. It was fascinating to observe that the seven individuals not only kept their previous measure, but they improved the average to a constant Frequent answer.

Based on the results of this survey, overall evaluation showed a clear difference of the level of satisfaction with their spiritual life for the ones participating in jail and prison ministry, compared with those who did not participate. Since the lack of participation in prison ministry of some people was due to some physical or another type of limitation or constraint, I don’t want to imply that only those who participated were enjoying a fullness of satisfaction in their spiritual life. However, the survey showed that for those who participated in the ministry, the direct involvement improved or elevated the level of their spiritual satisfaction.

In addition I don’t see any split tendencies to any of the surveyed individuals toward lowering their satisfaction in their spiritual life due to their involvement in prison ministry. Largely this ministry was perceived as a needed improvement in the spiritual life of the church members involved. Consequently, spiritual satisfaction may have not only a personal growth assessment, but also a beneficial influence in the extended brotherhood of the entire local church. A church with a growing number of individuals being highly satisfied with their spiritual life is definitely a place where the implemented ministry can be considered as an active factor to refresh this spiritual life. I may not have a complete evaluation of the quantity, but I have the evidence for improving the quality.

**Pastoral Reflection on the Impact of Prison Ministry**

Every ministry is a dialogue between pastor and congregation. I had the opportunity not only to fulfill the expectation of the church members for creating
outreach and evangelistic programs, but also I used my skills to evaluate and reflect how this prison ministry impacted the members I knew for some years. Through questions or personal dialogue, I was able to collect people’s reaction and their feedback related to prison ministry. Knowing some of their feelings and personal reactions toward the new ministry, it was a great approach to improve and strengthen this modality to impact the church, the community, and bring glory to God.

“I never shared my faith with other people until I got involved in prison ministry.” “Prison work taught me the true meaning of forgiveness, repentance, and restoration.” “I regularly pray every evening for the inmates I met in jail and prison.” “While participating in jail and prison ministry, I experienced a new dimension of spiritual satisfaction in my life.” “Since I started to be involved in jail ministry, I have a deeper appreciation for the freedom we enjoy every day.”

On one hand I was pleased to collect statements such as the ones I listed above. On the other hand, I suffered when my members were disappointed after every public evangelistic project, that were prepared and presented with high outcome expectations, and the overall project failed and brought no spiritual refreshment. By contrast, I was able to witness that jail and prison ministry infused joy and fulfillment in the hearts of not only the volunteers participating in the project, but also in the entire church body.

In my service as a volunteer chaplain with the jail and prison ministry team, I have been amazed by the unknown human resources I discovered in our local church. Prison ministry is unique among other options for outreach and evangelism. It is a ministry of careful listening and compassionate healing. As the volunteers ministered to the incarcerated individuals, they discovered forgiveness and reconciliation through
God’s love, they strengthened themselves in understanding God and receiving His blessing in their own lives. Therefore, prison ministry is not only a Christian duty, but is a natural response to God’s love for the hurt, often dysfunctional, and sometimes rebellious individuals. In helping others to change, God is changing our lives.

Involvement with jail and prison ministry keeps not only the local church involved, but also the pastor focused on life-and-death matters. Leaving the “free world” and entering the world behind prison walls tends to strip one of pretense and superficial preoccupations. As it is involved with people in jails and prisons, the church will realize that its refusal to minister to these populations lacks integrity, consistency, and trustworthiness.

Even though some obstacles for starting a jail and prison ministry exist, the potential benefits to pastors and congregations are substantial. Behind the walls of every prison and jail are fathers and mothers, sons and daughters, husbands and wives, friends and neighbors—all persons made in the image of God who, like the rest of us, have distorted that image and who long for love, reconciliation, and purpose. Ministry in such contexts of intense needs and opportunities reenergize and shape the ministry in the broader society where the same realities exist in less concentrated form.

**Applicability to Other Churches**

This is truly the day for every Christian church to step beyond its boundaries and offer not only hope through the preached Gospel inside the church walls, but some practical assistance to a world disabled by dysfunction. Locked beneath the trappings of addiction, prostitution, crime, and homelessness, silent treasures wait to be released. We must arise out of our comfort zone and rescue these hidden deposits of greatness. As a
result, many prisoners residing in correctional facilities today can return to their families as role models, to the church as a gift to the Body of Christ, and to the community as evidence of the love, power, and grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. With the careful mention that prison ministry is not for everybody and not for every church, I am confident that the present model can be a source of inspiration for many churches.

Ten key Aspects

After observing the implementation of the jail and prison ministry process in the Salem church, I fully agree with Phil Van Auken, professor at Baylor University, who identifies 10 ways prison ministry promotes church growth. I adapted his list, available on his webpage, http://business.baylor.edu/Phil_vanauken/prison.htm, to our own jail and prison ministry context:

1. *Prison ministry is America’s largest spiritual harvest field.* Almost two and half million inmates are found in the U.S., many who are genuinely seeking change, stability, and a trusted and lovely relationship in their lives. Many inmates acknowledge that coming to prison was “the best thing that ever happened to me” because they encountered Christ.

2. *Prison ministry does surprises for refreshing the spiritual lives of volunteers and consequently the churches they belong to.* There’s nothing like sharing the Gospel to open ears, teaching the Word to thirsty minds, and praying for people with broken hearts to revive one’s spiritual life and commitment. The newfound spiritual enthusiasm of a prison volunteer is contagious, quickly spreading throughout his or her Sabbath school class and friendship network.
3. **Prison ministry breathes new life into church evangelism and outreach programs.** Unfortunately many evangelism and visitation programs became ineffective and most church members want to avoid failure in the spiritual arena. They don’t see many genuine opportunities to share their faith and watch God reap the harvest. Doors are shut in their faces, invitations rejected, and the same prospect cards endlessly recycled. In prison ministry, by contrast, spiritually hungry inmates come to the Christian volunteer, often in plentiful numbers to hear the Word of God and the good news of salvation.

4. **Prison work can be a real shot in the arm to the Sabbath school and prayer ministry.** Class members or church members can pray for inmates on a personal level, participate in “Pen Pal” correspondence with recently converted inmates, and pray for and encourage those who actually volunteer “behind the walls.” Inmates are invariably deeply moved to know that a whole class is regularly praying for them. Most of the time when inmates are invited to share their prayer requests, it is very hard to stop them doing this. For many inmates, prison ministry is the first time they experienced genuine love from anyone.

5. **Prison ministry enhances worship.** Many prison volunteers receive a renewed vision for worship while attending church services behind walls. When repentant Christians of all color meet together to express their love for Christ and joy in being spiritual brothers and sisters, things happen. Prison worship is never characterized by stale routine or manufactured emotion. Inmates definitely see themselves as God’s chosen people, not God’s frozen people.
6. **Prison ministry enhances the church training effort by preparing volunteers for jail and prison ministry.** What they learn about sharing their faith, counseling, Bible study, and follow-up is equally applicable in free world ministry. Knowing they will actually utilize these skills upon entering prison makes volunteers attentive and serious learners.

7. **Prison ministry gets church members off the pews and outside church walls.** Christians of all backgrounds, education levels, and varieties of spiritual gifts participate in jail and prison ministry. Men and women, young (my son Michael was 5 when he started to sing for Marion County Jail) and old (95-year-old lady teaches Bible in the same jail), new Christian (several non-members joined the ministry) and senior saints, all have a place chosen by God to serve. And prison work is never very far away: city and county jails, juvenile detention centers, or state and federal prisons.

8. **Prison ministry teaches deep spiritual lessons.** It teaches how to forgive, how to restore, and how to really pray. It also teaches very practical lessons about listening, patience, cross-cultural communication, and theological diversity among Christians.

9. **Prison ministry promotes cooperation and goodwill among diverse Christians.** In jail and prison ministry we were working together with Christians from different denominations, socioeconomic backgrounds, and theological points of view. In jail and prison ministry we are not competitors, but brothers and sisters in Christ.

10. **Prison ministry produces new church members and ministry volunteers.** Contrary to the worry of some ministers that prison ministry will steal away their volunteers, Christians who become active in the spiritual basics of witnessing, spiritual teaching/counseling, and prayer gain a renewed desire to serve their local churches. Many
times it is the pastor or staff member who is most revived by contact or personal involvement with prison ministry. Definitely I am one of them and a witness that there’s always an unmistakable spark of joy and enthusiasm when the jail and prison ministry team share their experiences before the local church.

Cautions

Prison ministry is not for everyone. If people are uncomfortable going inside a prison, they may ask those involved in ministry how can they help from the outside.

Prison ministry is a submissive ministry. Volunteers have to do what the authorities in the prison say. Volunteers will not have unlimited freedom to do everything they may want, but always they can submit their request to the prison chaplain or administration for a resolution.

There is a significant difference in the way prison ministry is organized in Adventist churches as compared to other religious groups. Congregations of other faiths are more likely to be involved in jail and prison ministry in collaboration with another organization. In every church I served in my ministry, I perceived that Adventist congregations are more likely to directly provide jail or prison ministry on their own. However, working with the Salem church, I was delighted to eyewitness a friendly relationship between our ministry team and the teams belonging to other denomination.

In jail and prison ministry, volunteers may become discouraged when they see repeat returnees (reoffenders), but they should not get discouraged about them coming back. When offenders come back, the ministry team may see it as another opportunity to influence them for good. Remember the gospel story: Jesus expelled seven demons from Mary Magdalene, delivering her multiple times from the power of Satan (Mark 16:9). We
cannot control what a repeat offender does. God gave us the freedom to make choices. All we can do is to continue to reach out to them as Jesus did to Peter when he denied Him three times (Matt 26: 69-75).

While clergy are permitted extended personal visits with jail inmates if they come at a reasonable hour, the members of the jail ministry team are restricted to normal visiting days and hours, and the visit will count against the prisoner's one allotted visit per visiting week or day. Since the visitation time is limited (30 minutes per week for every inmate of the Illinois jails), it is appropriate for a volunteer to plan a visit, only if the inmate requested his/her visitation. For most of them it is important to allow their family the opportunity to visit them while the volunteers will have the opportunity to meet them during their religious service or Bible study class.

General Recommendations to the Church

In light of the facts presented in this project my recommendation for the Salem Adventist Church is to faithfully continue the jail and prison ministry project. This means that both church leaders and members must see this ministry as essential for reviving the entire church and not only as a volunteer department tolerated by the church organization. For most Christians, the prison culture is like visiting a foreign land on an overseas trip, and the thought of ministering in prisons to those incarcerated is an intimidating prospect. A jail and prison ministry will empower any pastor, educator, or lay leader in doing effective ministry, by providing a view of prison life, which is in many ways similar to the story of our salvation.

My basic recommendation to the Seventh-day Adventist church and its leaders, representing church administration on the local level, is to support and encourage every
initiative of the members or of the leaders for starting a jail and prison ministry in their local church. Rediscovering the fulfillment that comes with evangelistic success and outreach will provide vision and mission empowering for any church that experienced failure in the last decade or so.

Recommendations for Starting a Prison Ministry

Based on my experience described in this project and adapting an idea borrowed from *You came unto me*, (Harvest Time International, n.d.) I am suggesting the following seven steps in the process of starting a jail or prison ministry:

1. *Pray about it.* All ministries are powered by prayer. It’s important to understand what God wants for your church and for your individual role in it. Establish a foundation of prayer before you begin a prison ministry.

2. *Consult your spiritual leader.* If you are a pastor, consult with your board. If you are a church member, talk with your pastor. This is important because you need to gain the interest and support of your pastor or spiritual leader. This support is vital for obtaining volunteers to staff the program. The key will be a practical demonstration of how this ministry works cooperatively with other programs, ministries, and services of the church by putting members to work both inside and outside institutions.

3. *Do an analysis.* Here are some questions to answer in your analysis: What jails and prisons are in your immediate area? Is there a local ministerial association? What are they doing, if anything? Are they interested in jail and prison ministry? (If they already have a program and have gained access to local institutions, perhaps you can be part of it.) Who is in charge of the volunteers at the institution? Contact them and find out how you get cleared for ministry inside the institution. Are there forms you need to fill
out? Is there a special training you must take? What identification do you need for clearance? What needs exist in their institution? What needs can you and/or your church fill? Try not to duplicate efforts of other Christian organizations. We should complement, not compete with, one another.

4. Prepare a program proposal. A proposal will define the purpose, objectives, and practical aspects of your program. You will have to submit it for approval to the institution where you plan to minister. The proposal will be used as a tool for volunteer recruitment. (You must know what type of ministry you will be conducting in order to recruit qualified volunteers.) Your proposal should consider things like: goals, benefits, specifics of the proposed program, director, volunteers, facilities, days and time, equipment, and funding. If you have already successfully conducted prison ministries elsewhere, attach letters of recommendation and/or commendations from jail or prison officials at the institutions where you ministered. If you have received requests from inmates in the institution the proposed program is for, attach these to your proposal.

5. Submit your proposal. Submit a copy of your proposal to the chaplain or proper authorities at the prison and wait for their response. They may call you in to meet with them to discuss the proposal. If so, be on time, appropriately dressed, and properly prepared for your appointment. If you do not receive a response to the proposal after a reasonable length of time, take the initiative and call and schedule an appointment with the person to whom it was submitted. If your request to provide services is denied, try again in a couple of months. This could very well be a test of your commitment, dedication, and patience. Administrators and chaplains also quit, retire, or transfer and someone else may be more favorable to your program.
6. **Secure and train volunteers.** After you receive the approval for the prison ministry you need to secure volunteers to conduct the program. A volunteer is important to an inmate: as a link to the outside world, a friend, and a model of mature Christian life; to the families of inmates: by providing information, practical and spiritual help as they cope with their dilemma; to the chaplain: by as assisting and supporting his programs; to the prison administration: as an additional resource for helping with rehabilitation and transition back into society; to other volunteers: as a source of encouragement, training, and an example to follow; to the local church: as a channel of communication, increasing awareness of the need for jail and prison ministries; to himself: as this ministry provides an opportunity for using his or her spiritual gifts and putting faith into action.

7. **Plan your first meeting in jail or prison.** Be sure volunteers are well trained. Be sure everyone is dressed properly for visitation or group outreach at the prison. Check that everyone has the proper identification for entering the facility. There are many different ways a service or group meeting inside the prison can be run. If you discover an effective format, don't hesitate to make it the backbone of your ministry, but don't be afraid to try new ideas and fresh approaches from time to time.

**Recommendations for Pastors**

It is imperative for pastors to develop a more open attitude to and be involved in prison ministry. Here are seven suggestions for them:

1. **Prison ministry is an opportunity that can reinvigorate the evangelistic passion of Adventist people.** But you have to model that passion.

2. **A starting point may be a search for creative alternatives to traditional forms of outreach that have not been successful and have discouraged your people.**
3. Develop the necessary skills for training people for prison ministry and be affirming in every stage of implementing this type of ministry in your church.

4. Step forward in faith and believe in the people that God called you to lead into His kingdom.

5. Bring to your people the call for prison ministry with the expectation that they will join you. When they do develop their commitment into an organized outreach ministry that will bring you and your members the joy of a great fulfillment of their dream to change the world.

6. Always seek to make a difference in the community surrounding the church building location.

7. Give glory to God for achieving any success in jail and prison ministry.

Recommendation for Adventist Church Organizations

This study has demonstrated the special receptivity of the church members to being part of jail or prison ministry. The fact that there is a jail or prison in the neighborhood of almost any congregation of the Seventh-day Adventist church in North America makes this type of outreach a true opportunity for local churches. However, at the moment, support for prison ministry is weak and unpredictable. But to take advantage of this God-given opportunity demands that the leaders in the Adventist church organizations be more intentional in their support of jail or prison ministries at the local level. Given the continuing rise of the prison population in the United States it seems that the importance of this ministry will only increase in the future. For this reason I urge conferences, unions, and the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists to
become more proactive in supporting these ministries and offer the following recommendations:

1. This study has documented the power of a prison ministry to regenerate the spiritual life and evangelistic fervor of a congregation. We would have benefitted greatly from a more effective support system in the Adventist organization. For this reason I recommend the implementation of an official and effective departmental structure for prison ministry at every level of Seventh-day Adventist organization, and the introduction of this ministry as a viable and active community outreach program of the church rather than just an optional platform for very specialized ministry.

2. Find ways to more often recognize and affirm the work of independent jail and prison ministries led by Adventist people both inside and outside of the organizational church structure and to bring these ministries to the attention of the local church.

3. Encourage the division, the unions, and the conferences to appoint prison ministry coordinators who are effectively involved in actual prison ministry and not overwhelmed with other ministry responsibilities. One certain way to kill a ministry is to assign so many responsibilities to its leaders that they can’t really care well for the ministry they are supposed to lead. These coordinators should function as links between the denominational organizational structure and the local churches and its pastors, a function that does not usually exist at the present time in the Adventist church, even though some conferences and unions may have a jail and prison ministry coordinator on their staff.
4. Understand that jail and prison ministries do not only serve outsiders. Many members have family members, friends, neighbors, coworkers or people they know in jail or in prison for the short term or long term. The needs of this group of people are a great opportunity for ministry. One of the bright sides of jail and prison time is that they often are some of the best occasions to introduce Jesus to people.

5. Adventist universities and the Seminary should consider including in their curriculum classes introducing students to jail and prison ministry. Besides the professional classes that may be part of the chaplaincy cohorts, I suggest such classes dealing with organizing and leading jail and prison ministries be offered as a general requirement during the formation of new pastors or social workers.

6. Finally, I would like to see a resource center for jail and prison ministry that brings together resources from networks inside or outside the denomination. I noticed that the NAD Prison Ministry Department was created for this purpose. Yet, at the present time it functions only in a limited way as an accessible resource and support center for local churches desiring to get involved in this ministry. The time for a major update and change of the pattern how we encourage jail and prison ministry in the church has come.

It is my prayer that this project will make a useful contribution to the church I love, and to its members preparing themselves and the entire world for the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.
APPENDIX A

THE NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION

ADVENTIST PRISON VOLUNTEER NETWORK
The North American Division Adventist Prison Volunteer Network

The North American Division Adult Ministries Department, with full recognition of its responsibility and privilege to encourage, inspire, educate, coordinate, and offer advocacy for all persons within the North American Division territory who choose to serve as Prison Volunteers, and who desire such, has established, by vote of the North American Division Committee on June 1, 2005, The North American Division Adventist Prison Volunteer Network.

It should be understood that the establishment of the “Network” will in no way obviate the general functions and responsibilities of the Prison Ministry Departmental function of the Adult Ministries Department. The Adventist Prison Volunteer Network operates as a function of the North American Division Adult Ministries Volunteer Network.

The Department will continue its function in the areas of, (1) Coordination of General Prison Ministry functions and assistance with Prison Ministry Education through the Local Conference Prison Ministry Directors, (2) Crisis Intervention, (3) Professional Development through Resource Preparation and Training through the NAD Training Consultant, (4) Consultation regarding application for Grants for Local Projects and,(5) Representation of the Division and its entities to the General Public on Prison Ministry matters of broad spectrum.

Features of the “Network” will include:

- Oversight and Administration of the “Network” will be the responsibility of the NAD Adult Ministries Director. The “Network” will function in harmony with the Prison Ministry Directors of the Union/Local Conferences, and the General Conference/NAD Office of Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries Prison Chaplaincy Cohort.

- The core of the Advisory Committee of the “Network” will be comprised of nine Prison Volunteers, one from each Union of the North American Division, who will serve one year at a time. Partners to the Advisory Committee will be Local Conference/Union Prison Ministry Directors, who will serve on a rotating basis. The NAD Vice President (for Ministries) will serve as Chair of the “Network.”

- Membership will be on a direct voluntary basis. Interested persons will provide an e-mail address, phone number, an indication of where church membership is held, and the name of the Prison Ministry group with which they are associated. Persons not active, but who have an interest, are welcome.

- In addition, solicitations for membership will be done through the offices of the Local/Union Conference Directors of Prison Ministry, general advertising, and word of mouth.

- A benefit of membership will be the “Network” monthly E-Newsletter, Network News. Contents will include Greetings/Inspiration from the Director; A Prison Ministry Blessing/Success Story; Best Practice Tips; Meet Your Neighbor; Meet The Directors; Q&A; “What’s Hot, What’s Not?”; “Happenings”; Resource Recommendations; and
“Inmate Spiritual Counseling” (our new NAD standard Prison Ministry training protocol) curriculum segments.

- “Network” members will have the opportunity to submit Prison Volunteer Ministry Reports through the new Adult Ministries website.
- The “Network” Advisory Committee will also assist in facilitating Convocations and other centralized training initiatives.
- The “Network” will maintain a directory of individual members and various Prison Ministry Organizations for the purpose of facilitating ministry contact referrals.

Source: http://www.nadadultministries.org/prison.html
APPENDIX B

ELLEN WHITE, “VISIT TO THE PRISON,” SIGNS OF THE TIMES,

AUGUST 1, 1878
Sunday, June 23, by invitation, I visited the prison, in Salem, Oregon, in company with Brother and Sister Carter, and Sister Jordan, who took me there in her carriage. The superintendent and warden of the prison were introduced to me. When the time arrived for service we were conducted to the chapel, a room made cheerful by an abundance of light, and pure fresh air. At a signal from a bell, two men opened the great iron gates by means of a lever, and the prisoners came flocking from their cells into the chapel. The doors were securely closed behind them, and for the first time in my life, I was immured in prison walls.

I had anticipated seeing a set of repulsive looking men. In this I was disappointed; many of them seemed to be intelligent, and some appeared to be men of ability. They were dressed in the coarse, but neat striped prison uniform, their hair smooth, and boots brushed. As I looked upon the varied physiognomies before me, I thought: To each of these men has been committed peculiar gifts or talents for use, and not for abuse. All before me, from those who had occupied conspicuous and important positions in the world, and in the church, even those who had been most lowly and obscure, have been entrusted with some talents, whether of wealth, station, influence, kindly sympathies or affections, they were given from the heavenly treasury, and were to have been used for the glory of God, and the benefit of the world.

The men before me had despised the gifts of heaven, and had abused, and misapplied them. Some of the convicts manifested a forced unnatural cheerfulness. But many, especially the older men, looked exceedingly sad and melancholy. Before me were youths of tender years, and the hardened, gray-haired sinner, all under the bondage of the law, because they had transgressed its statutes. As I looked upon young men of eighteen to twenty and thirty years of age, I thought of their unhappy mothers, and of the grief and remorse which was their bitter portion. Had they done their duty by their children? Had they not indulged them in their own will and way, and neglected to teach them the statutes of God, and his claims upon them? Many of those mothers’ hearts had been broken by the ungodly course pursued by their children.

When all the company were assembled, Brother Carter read the hymn. All had books, and joined heartily in singing. One, who seemed to be an accomplished musician, played the organ. I then opened the meeting by prayer, and again all joined in singing. I spoke from the words of John: “Behold, what manner of love the father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God; therefore, the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”

I exalted before them the infinite sacrifice that the father made, in giving his beloved Son for fallen men, that they might through obedience be transformed, and become the acknowledged sons of God. The church and the world are called upon to behold and admire a love which thus expressed is beyond human comprehension, and even amazed the angels of heaven. This love was so deep, so broad, and so high, that it filled the holy angels with amazement, and language in which to describe it, failing the
inspired apostle, he calls upon the church and the world to behold it—to make it the theme of contemplation, and of admiration.

I presented before my hearers the sin of Adam in the transgression of the Father’s express commands. God made man upright, perfectly holy and happy; but he lost the favor of God, and destroyed his own happiness by disobedience of the Father’s law. The sin of Adam plunged the race in hopeless misery and despair. Every successive generation upon the earth have degenerated physically, mentally, and morally. Sin with its terrible curse corrupted the world, and almost obliterated the image of God in man. But the wonderful, pitying love of God did not leave men in their hopeless, fallen condition to utterly perish. He gave his well beloved Son for their salvation. He who was the brightness of God’s glory, and the express image of him took man’s, nature, to suffer affliction, scorn and hatred of the very ones he came to save. Christ entered the world, his divinity clothed in humanity; he passed over the ground where Adam fell; he bore the test which Adam failed to endure; he overcame every temptation of Satan, and thus redeemed Adam’s disgraceful failure and fall.

The sons of men gave way to the indulgence of appetite, which set on fire their passions. They became violent, basely corrupt, and hardened. Their thoughts and acts were evil, and God finally visited his wrath upon the children of disobedience, and washed the earth of its moral pollution by a flood. But God acknowledged the few on earth who were righteous. Noah and his family were saved. In the midst of his wrath and retributive justice God remembered mercy, and left not the righteous and faithful to perish with the wicked.

When the earth became peopled again, sin once more spread abroad over the land. Wickedness covered all nations like the pall of death. Satan compassed the ruin of thousands through temptation to indulge appetite. He has ever thus sought to pervert the senses of man, weaken his moral power, and make him the slave of appetite; he then gains control of him, and uses him as his agent in practicing crime, and all manner of wickedness. We see, at the present day, great lack of discernment in regard to right and wrong, and an absence of principle. We may trace this lamentable state of things to the general indulgence of perverted appetite, which excites the baser passions, and urges its victim on to excesses of every kind, and finally to crimes of every degree.

Intemperance of any kind will enervate a character originally firm, noble, and independent. His fine sensibilities will be blunted, his conscience will become seared. He will form bad associations, evil communications will corrupt his good manners. One false step leads him to another, which may be fatal, and he becomes the tool of Satan. Men plunge into wild license and reckless dissipation, and call it freedom of action, when they are in veriest bondage to the most cruel tyrant who knows no compassion for the wretched victims he allures to ruin. When the world was filled with iniquity God lifted up his standard against Satan by sending his Son to the world in the likeness of sinful flesh. Christ bridged the gulf that sin had made, which separated earth from heaven, and man from God.

I then referred to the long fast of Christ in the wilderness. The sin of the indulgence of appetite, and its power over human nature can never be fully realized except as that long fast of Christ when contending single-handed with the prince of the
power of darkness is studied and understood. Man’s salvation was at stake. Would Satan or would the Redeemer of the world come off conqueror! It is impossible for us to conceive with what intense interest angels of God watched the trial of their loved Commander.

Jesus came from heaven to earth, assumed man’s nature, and was tempted in all points like as we are that he might know how to succor those who should be tempted. Christ’s life is for our example. He shows in his willing obedience, how man may keep the law of God, and that transgression of the law, and not obedience of it, brings him into bondage. The Saviour was full of compassion and love; he never spurned the truly penitent, however great their guilt; but he severely denounced hypocrisy of every sort, he is acquainted with the sins of men, he knows all their acts, and reads their secret motives; yet he does not turn away from them in their iniquity. He pleads and reasons with the sinner, and, in one sense,—that of having himself borne the weakness of humanity,—he puts himself on a level with him. “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

Man, who has defaced the image of God in his soul by a corrupt life cannot, by mere human effort, effect a radical change in himself. He must accept the provisions of the gospel; he must be reconciled to God through obedience of his law and faith in Jesus Christ. His life from thenceforth must be governed by a new principle. Through repentance, faith and good works he may develop and perfect a righteous character, and claim through the merits of Christ the privileges of the sons of God. The principles of divine truth received and cherished in the heart will carry us to a height of moral excellence we had not deemed possible for us to reach. “And it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as he is pure.”

Here is a work for man to do. He must face the mirror of God’s law, discern the defects in his moral character and put away his sins, washing his robes of character in the blood of the Lamb. Envy, pride, malice, deceit, strife, crime will be cleansed from the heart that is recipient of the love of Christ, and cherishes the hope of being made like him when we shall see him as he is. The religion of Christ refines and dignifies its possessor, whatever his associations or station in life may be. Men who become enlightened Christians rise above the level of their former character into greater mental and moral strength. Those fallen and degraded by sin and crime may become but a little lower than the angels through the merits of the Savior.

But the influence of a gospel hope will not lead the sinner to look upon the salvation of Christ as a matter of free grace, while he continues to live in transgression of the law of God. When the light of truth dawns upon his mind, and he fully understands the requirements of God, and realizes the extent of his transgressions, he will reform his ways, become loyal to God through the strength obtained from his Savior, and lead a new and purer life. Those who overcome in the name of Jesus will stand about the great white throne, with crowns of immortal glory, waving the palm branches of victory. They will be sons of God, children of the heavenly King, their lives running parallel with the life of God. The joy of the Lord will be their joy, and no shadow will ever darken their heavenly
home. Said Christ, “Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.” While mercy lingers, I beseech you to make the most of the probationary time left you, in preparing for eternity, that life may not be an utter failure, and that in the time of solemn scrutiny you may be found with those who are accepted of God, and are called the sons of God.
APPENDIX C

WHAT IS PRISON MINISTRY?

A POWERPOINT PRESENTATION SEMINAR
WHAT IS JAIL AND PRISON MINISTRY?

by Florin Liga
Salem Adventist Church
Salem, IL
January 2008

1. Introduction

- This presentation is first of the four-session training seminar.
- The lack of motivation for Prison Ministry in the past is not a reason to keep it the same in the future.
- If we have the impression that this is an optional ministry for your church, this seminar may prove that it is vital for fulfilling our mission and the life style for the Seventh-day Adventist people.

2. Justification for Doing Prison Ministry

- Biblical Justification
- Spirit of Prophecy Justification
- Social Justification

Biblical Justification

- 126 references to “prison”
- 229 references to “captivity”
- “But the Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin” — Gal 3:22

Seminar Outline:

1. Introduction
2. Justification for doing prison ministry
3. Statistics about Correctional System
4. What the Prison Ministry is all about
5. How to start and organize a Prison Ministry
6. Qualification and characteristics for doing it
7. Issues and challenges in Prison Ministry

“FOR I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.’ Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.’” — Matthew 25:35-40
**Biblical Justification**

“IS this not the fast that I have chosen: To loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out; when you see the naked, that you cover him, and not hide yourself from your own flesh?” — Isaiah 58:6-7.

“THE Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, because the LORD has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound.” — Isaiah 61:1.

**Biblical Justification**

“Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners.” — Hebrews 13:3.

“Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.” — Galatians 6:2.

“...Whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant... for even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” — Mark 10:43, 45

**Spirit of Prophecy Justification**

“God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners, Christ died for us” — Romans 5:8.

“He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous”. — Matthew 5:45.

“Take tender care of those who are weak; and be patient with everyone. See that no one pays back evil for evil, but always try to do good to each other and to everyone else. Always keep on praying. For this is God’s will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.” — I Thesalonians 5:14-19

**Spirit of Prophecy Justification**

“CHRIST identifies Himself with every child of humanity. That we might become members of the heavenly family, He became a member of the earthly family. He is the Son of man, and thus a brother to every son and daughter of Adam. His followers are not to feel themselves detached from the perishing world around them...The fallen, the erring, and the sinful, Christ’s love embraces; and every deed of kindness done to uplift a fallen soul, every act of mercy, is accepted as done to Him.” — The Desire of Ages, p. 638.

**Spirit of Prophecy Justification**

THE 25th chapter of Matthew presents the fact that when one opens the door to the needy and suffering we are welcoming unseen angels. “It was I who was hungry and thirsty. It was I who was a stranger. It was I who was sick. It was I who was in prison. While you were feasting at your bountifully spread table, I was famishing in the hovel or the empty street. While you were at ease in your luxurious home, I had not where to lay My head. While you crowded your wardrobe with rich apparel, I was destitute. While you pursued your pleasures, I languished in prison.” — The Desire of Ages, p. 639, 640.

**Spirit of Prophecy Justification**

“IN the great Judgment day, those who have not worked for Christ, who have drifted along thinking of themselves, caring for themselves, will be placed by the Judge of the whole earth with those who did evil. They receive the same condemnation.” — The Desire of Ages, p. 641.

“IT is His plan that men are to work for their fellow men.” — The Acts of the Apostles, p. 109.
**Spirit of Prophecy Justification**

“GOD could send means from heaven to carry on His work; but this is out of His order. He has ordained that men should be His instruments, that as a great sacrifice was made to redeem them, they should act a part in this work of salvation, by making a sacrifice for one another, and by thus doing show how highly they prize the sacrifice that has been made for them.” — *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 1, p.10.

“All that the apostles did, every church member today is to do.” — *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 7, p.33.

**Spirit of Prophecy Justification**

“When we realize that we are workers together with God, His promises will not be spoken with indifference. They will burn in our hearts, and kindle upon our lips. To Moses, when called to minister to an ignorant, undisciplined, and rebellious people, God gave the promise, ‘My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.’ And He said, ‘Certainly I will be with thee.’ Ex. 33:14; 3:12. This promise is to all who labor in Christ’s stead for His afflicted and suffering ones.” — *The Desire of Ages*, p. 641.

**Spirit of Prophecy Justification**

“IT is the absence of the Spirit that makes the gospel ministry so powerless. Learning, talents, eloquence, every natural or acquired endowment, may be possessed; but without the presence of the Spirit of God, no heart will be touched, no sinner be won to Christ. On the other hand, if they are connected with Christ, if the gifts of the Spirit are theirs, the poorest and most ignorant of His disciples will have a power that will tell upon hearts. God makes them the channel for the outworking of the highest influence in the universe.” — *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 328.

**Spirit of Prophecy Justification**

“THOSE whose affections are set on God will succeed.” — *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 7, p. 90.

“To every worker I would say: Go forth in humble faith, and the Lord will go with you...The power is of God. Work in dependence upon Him, remembering that you are laborers together with Him. He is your Helper. Your strength is from Him. He will be your wisdom, your righteousness, your sanctification, your redemption...He will be your comfort, your rest.” — *Gospel Workers*, p. 38.

**Social Justification**

- We are witnessing the alarming increasing rate of civil disobedience. Often this disobedience is the result of the deterioration of social values that serve as adhesive components for strong families. It appears that the social behavioral patterns of a vast number of individuals are like a runaway train that has no conductor or sense of direction.
- Because of the hopelessness and escalating confusion in the lives of distracted human beings, it is imperative that social intervention from help groups become a high priority in order to restore the normality in the lives of the distracted.
Social Justification

- The children One in every 10 children have a parent incarcerated, on probation or on parole. (National Center for Children & Families, Wash. D.C.)
- They are 10 times more likely to become inmates themselves.

Social Justification

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF AN AMERICAN CHILD
- 9 children are murdered
- 30 children are wounded from child abuse
- 3 children die from child abuse
- 27 children die from poverty
- 2,350 children are in adult jails

Social Justification

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF AN AMERICAN CHILD
- 307 children are arrested for violence with firearms
- 5,703 teenagers are victims of violent crimes
- 2,255 teenagers drop out of schools
- 2,868 babies are born into poverty

3. Statistics About the Correctional System

a. Did You Know?
b. 10 Things You Should Know About Women in Prison in the United States
c. Correctional Centers in Illinois

Did You Know?

- U.S. incarceration rate #1 in the world.
- The prison population increases by more than 1,000 each week
- 2,400,000 inmates and growing exponentially
- Less than a third has committed a violent crime.
- 4,600,000 are on parole/probations
- 1 in 34 Americans have been in prison.
- 1,000 new prisons were built in the past 20 years

Did You Know?

- 700K released from prison in 2006.
- More than one million projected by 2010.
- Another ten million will be released from local jails.
- California alone has more inmates than France, Great Britain, Germany, Japan, Singapore, and the Netherlands combined.
- The American national incarceration rate is 445 per 100,000.
- Prisons are a $35 billion a year industry.
**Did You Know?**

- Firearms killed twice as many American children under 10 years of age in 1991 than all the American soldiers killed in the Persian Gulf and Somalia combined.
- An American child is 15 times more likely to be killed by gunfire than a child growing up in Northern Ireland.
- Homicide is the third leading cause of death of American children between the ages of five and fourteen.
- The average hospital cost for treating a child injured by a gun is $14,434.00.

**10 Things About Women in Prison in the United States**

1. There are over 112,498 women in prison in the United States today.
   a. Mostly for check forgery, illegal credit card uses, and property crimes.
   b. 80% made $2,000 or less prior to the year of their arrest.
   c. 90% made under $10,000 a year.
2. Of the women convicted of violent crimes, the vast majority was convicted for defending themselves or their children from abuse.

**10 Things About Women in Prison in the United States**

3. 54% of women in prison are of ethnic origin.
4. 90% of women in prison are single mothers.
5. There are 167,000 children in the United States whose mothers are in prison.
6. Women of ethnic origin are twice more likely to be convicted of killing an abusive husband than white women.

**Correctional Centers in Illinois**

- 44 State Correctional Facilities
- 5 Federal Prison Location
- 102 County Jails

**4. What is the Prison Ministry all About?**

- Established Regular Service
- Local Church Support of This Ministry
- Integrated them in your community
**Established Regular Service**

**Location:**
- State Prisons
- Federal Prison
- County Jails

**Type of service:**
- Religious
- Social
- Professional

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**Established Regular Service**

**WHO CAN CONDUCT THE SERVICE?**

- Church Leaders
- Pastor
- Teacher & Trained Members
- Christian Counselor
- Accountant Healthcare

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**Local Church Support of Prison Ministry**

- Learn and develop a positive attitude toward Prison Ministry;
- Dedicate a couple of hours per months to visit an inmate (Especially for those who are not part of the ministry);
- Write a letter and accept to receive mail at a P O Box or at the church address;

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**Local Church Support of Prison Ministry**

- Remember some factors the inmates face every day: Less than 20% of inmates receive mail regularly. Inmates are very lonely.
- Friends and family often disappear.
- Isolated, they feel left for dead.
- Receiving junk mail even brightens their day
- Receiving mail from caring brother and sisters is resuscitating.

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**Integrate Them in Your Community**

- Receive them as members in your local church and treat them as your own brother and sister.
- Offer spiritual, emotional and sometime material support as they go out of prison. Use wisdom in dealing with every situation.
- Be ready to do this not only with your members, but with any other inmate coming from different part of the state or of the country, who intends to relocate in your church territory and is recommended by another Prison Ministry unit.

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**5. How to Start a Prison Ministry**

- The Personal Ministries Department in your church fosters this work.
- This department should establish a Prison Ministry, which may vary in size from 5 to 25 persons.
- Based on actual organizational diagram it is the responsibility of the Personal Ministries Leader to start a Prison Ministry team.
Some Suggestion for Starting a Prison Ministry

- Have a desire to follow the commission of Jesus, to visit and minister for those in prison.
- Survey the church to see who is interested in this Ministry.
- Solicit 5 to 25 members to be a part of the Prison Ministry team and Organize for service.
- Contact the Chaplain/Volunteer Coordinator to secure an appointed time to discuss your plans of setting up a Prison Ministry at his facility.
- Prisons and jails will orientate you to the policies and rules that govern their facilities.

6. Qualifications & Characteristics for Doing Prison Ministry

- Three Essential Qualification
- Six Essential Characteristics

Three Essential Qualifications

(1) Consecration.
- “He who loves Christ the most will do the greatest amount of good.”—The Desire of Ages, p. 251.
- “[Christ] demands the heart, the mind, the soul, the strength. Self is not to be cherished.”—Christian Service, p. 236.

Three Essential Qualifications

(2) Faithfulness.
It is a wonderful thing to find a person whose promises are as sure as the rising of the sun, whose simplest word is as good as his oath, who does just what he says he will do at the moment he says he will do it.

Three Essential Qualification

(3) Perseverance.
A Prison Ministry worker should work with the same untiring perseverance and unflagging zeal that Christ brought unto his labors.

Six Essential Characteristics

(1) Love. An outgrowth of unselfish concern for all persons.
(2) Empathy. The ability to feel with people and put one’s self in their place.
(3) Sense of Mission. A desire to give priority to something; wanting to do that rather than anything else in the world.
Six Essential Characteristics

(4) Spiritual Growth. A Prison Ministry worker must not only lead others to a new spiritual growth, but likewise must be willing and anxious to grow as well.

(5) Tact and Wisdom. “The Savior never suppressed the truth, but He uttered it always in love. In His intercourse with others, He exercised the greatest tact, and He was always kind and thoughtful.” — Gospel Workers, p. 118.

(6) Genuineness. There must be no pretense in the lives of those who have such a sacred and solemn message as we have been called to bear.

7. Issues and Challenges in Prison Ministry

- Denominational history
- Members’ preconceived ideas
- Vulnerability of the church members, especially young people and children.
- Reservations to trust people you don’t know, on the top of them having a criminal background.

Denominational History

- NAD coordinator
- Part of the Adult Ministry Department; www.nadadultministries.org/
- Almost no union coordinators (2 unions in NAD)
- Only 8 conference coordinators in NAD
- No local church coordinators, except personal voluntary initiatives.

Preconceived Ideas of Members

- True issue, but...
- Remember “Joseph’s case” in Genesis

Vulnerability and Security

- Vulnerability of the church member, especially young people and children.
- Reservation on trusting people you don’t know, on the top of them having criminal background.
- Conflict of interest for institutional workers or for volunteers.
- A stigma for the church being too friendly with the inmates.
- Often you may receive visits from parole or enforcement officers.

Questions & Answers
APPENDIX D

RESOURCES AND SUPPORT FOR JAIL AND PRISON MINISTRY
RESOURCES AND SUPPORT FOR JAIL AND PRISON MINISTRY

Agencies


**Alpha**, an interdenominational national network of over 8,300 churches that regularly conduct the Alpha course with inmates in US prisons and jails. Alpha provides a referral source for in-prison Bible studies and re-dash entry assistance. See [www.alphausa.org](http://www.alphausa.org).

**Bible studies for congregations.** Calvin Institute of Christian Worship offers a downloadable study article with principles of restorative justice, profiles of individuals, and links for ways to get involved. Go to: [http://www.calvin.edu/worship/stories/restore_justice.php](http://www.calvin.edu/worship/stories/restore_justice.php).

**Catholic Charities.** Celebrate Recovery is a recovery program based on eight principles from the Beatitudes. See [www.celebraterecovery.com](http://www.celebraterecovery.com).

**Center of Justice and Reconciliation**, Eastern Mennonite University, c/o Dr. Howard Zehr, 1200 Park Rd., Harrisburg, VA 22802-2462; Tel: 540-432-4000, Ext 4492; email Zehr@emu.edu

**Florida Prison Ministry** was formed in 1989 with Frank and Maxine Barton along with Elder Malcolm and Hazel Gordon introducing prison ministry to the Florida Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist. They have a good resources database for training and an online manual for starting a Prison Ministry. See: [http://floridaprisonministries.org](http://floridaprisonministries.org).

**Friends Outside** is a nonprofit community-based organization that has been providing programs and services to families and individuals involved in the criminal justice system since 1995. They believe in respect for others, the capacity of human beings to change, and the importance of the family and the community. See [http://friendsoutside.org](http://friendsoutside.org).

**Kairos Prison Ministry International** is the parent organization of a body of ministries addressing the spiritual needs of incarcerated men, women, and children, their families, and those who work in the prison environment. See [www.kairosprisonministry.org](http://www.kairosprisonministry.org).

**Navigator’s Prison Ministry**—a prison fellowship that works to share God’s love with these men and women and helps equip them for life outside the walls. They collaborate...
with churches, volunteers, and ministries to support those who enter the prisons. See http://www.navigators.org/us/ministries/prison.

**Prison Fellowship** (PF). This ministry provides pre-release counseling and support and after-release assistance. Contact Charles Colson; 1-800-552-6435, 44180 Riverside Parkway, Lansdowne, VA 20176; 703-478-0100; Angel Tree 800-322-5527 www.angeltree.org; correspondence at: http://www.pfm.org.

**Restoration Justice Community Network**, PFI Centre for Justice and Reconciliation, PO Box 17434, Washington, D.C. 20041; Tel: 1-703-481-0000; Fax: 1-703-481-0003; email: cjr@pfi.org.

**Salvation Army** - any local Salvation Army group in the local era can provide more information and support. See: http://www.salvationarmyusa.org

**United Prison Ministries International**, located in the heart of Alabama, is currently ministering to over 3,000 prisons in all 50 states and hundreds of prisons around the world including Russia, Ukraine, Africa, Romania, Indonesia, India, Philippines and many other countries. Since 1981, UPMI has distributed more than 70,000,000 (seventy million) Bibles, and life changing Books free of charge to men, women and their families. See: www.upmi.org

**Wings Ministry.** The goal is to connect spouses, caretakers, and children of inmates with the nurturing and supporting relationships of Christian people in local churches. See http://www.wingsministry.org/index.htm.

**Yokefellows**—based on the teaching of Quaker Elton Trueblood, started in 1983 to build one-on-one relationships with prisoners through a visitation and aftercare program. The history, program, and aftercare work is described at: http://www.yokefellowpa.org.

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Books and Magazines


*Basic Christianity* by John Stott, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, Ill., 2012. ISBN: 0830834133, 9780830834136

*Born Again* by Charles Colson; Published by Chosen Books, a division of Baker Publishing Group, P O Box 6287 Grand Rapids, MI 49516, 2008. ISNB: 9780800794590

*Chicken Soup for the Prisoner’s Soul: 101 Stories to Open the Heart and Rekindle the Spirit of Hope, Healing, and Forgiveness* by Jack Canfield, Mark Victor Hansen, and Tom Lagana; Deerfield Beach, FL: Health Communications, 2000. ISBN: 1558748377; 9781558748378


In Touch—free subscriptions—Baptist. Charles Stanley also has DVDs and videos and a series called “The Extra Ordinary life” for a weekly class. In Touch Ministries, P.O. Box 7900, Atlanta, GA 30357.


Ned Rollo has written four books for people involved in prison ministry: 99 Days and a Get Up (Reentry), Man, I Need a Job (Employment), Crutch: Life without a Crutch (Overcoming Dependence), and A Map through the Maze (Orientation); Open, Inc., P.O. Box 472223, Garland, TX 75047-2223; 972-271-1971; 1-800-966-1966; (fax) 972-278-5884; www.openinc.org; Email: Info@openinc.org.

Prison Legal News, dedicated to protecting human rights, 2400 NW 80th St. #148, Seattle, WA 998117.


Upper Room—Methodist. Excellent daily devotionals. These are supplied FREE. Bi-monthly. Customer Services, P.O. Box 340012, Nashville, TN 37202; Tel: 800-972-0433.


United Methodist Church List of Recommended Reading for Prison Ministry.

All Alone in the World: Children of the Incarcerated - by Nell Bernstein

All Alone in the World reads as a compelling mixture of damage assessment and blueprint for the future. Using first-hand stories derived from dozens of interviews with children of incarcerated parents, Bernstein critiques policies around arrest, sentencing, visiting, foster care, reentry, and legacy.

Inside: Life Behind Bars in America - by Michael G. Santos

American jails and prisons confine nearly 13.5 million people each year, and it is estimated that 6 to 7 percent of the U.S. population will be confined in their lifetimes.
Despite these disturbing numbers, little is known about life inside beyond the mythology of popular culture.

_I Was in Prison: United Methodist Perspectives on Prison Ministry_- Edited by Shopshire, Hicks and Stoglin

United Methodists have a rich history of involvement in prison ministry and criminal justice work. Yet today, precisely at a time when incarceration is reaching unprecedented levels in the United States, prison ministry in The United Methodist Church is fragmented and badly in need of a fresh vision. _I Was In Prison_ seeks to address this need.

_Learning to Sing in a Strange Land: When a Loved One Goes to Prison_- by Rev. Wesley Stevens

When a loved one goes to prison, it is much like having a death in the family. This new book, written from a painful personal experience, will help families who are suffering the loss of a loved one to the criminal justice system.

_My Daddy Is in Jail_- By Janet M. Bender

_My Daddy Is In Jail_ is a long overdue resource for helping children cope with the incarceration of a loved one. It includes a read-aloud story, discussion guide, caregiver suggestions and optional small group counseling activities. With this book, helping professionals, and other caring adults, will find themselves better equipped to provide information and support to these vulnerable children and their families.

_Prison Ministry: Understanding Prison Culture Inside and Out_- by Lennie Spitale

For most Christians, prison culture is like visiting a foreign land, and the thought of ministering in prisons to those incarcerated is an intimidating prospect. _Prison Ministry_ will empower any pastor, educator, or lay leader in doing effective prison ministry by providing a thorough inside-out” view of prison life.

_Six Million Angels: Stories From 20 Years of Angel Tree's Ministry to the Children of Prisoners_- by Charles Colson

For 20 Years Prison Fellowship's Angel Tree ministry has touched the hearts of prisoners and their families by serving their children. In 2011 alone 50,000 volunteers from 14,000 churches provided Christmas gifts for more than 600,000 children.

_The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness_- by Michelle Alexander

In this incisive critique, former litigator-turned-legal-scholar Michelle Alexander provocatively argues that we have not ended racial caste in America: we have simply redesigned it. Alexander shows that, by targeting black men and decimating communities of color, the U.S. criminal justice system functions as a contemporary system of racial control, even as it formally adheres to the principle of color blindness.
The New Jim Crow challenges the civil rights community—and all of us—to place mass incarceration at the forefront of a new movement for racial justice in America.

*Twice Pardoned: An Ex-Con Talks to Parents and Teens* - by Harold Morris

Harold Morris began writing in 1984 when he was diagnosed with terminal cancer. He wanted to use his last few months to share the story of his life: falsely convicted of armed robbery and murder at age 29, he spent the next nine years behind bars, struggling to survive in what was widely recognized as the worst prison in the United States—Georgia State Penitentiary. But inside prison he found something unexpected; he found hope.

*Women Behind Bars: The Crisis of Women in the U.S. Prison System* - by Silja J.A. Talvi

More and more women—mothers, grandmothers, wives, daughters, and sisters—are doing hard prison time all across the United States. Many of them are facing the prospect of years, decades, even lifetimes behind bars. Oddly, there's been little public discussion about the dramatic increase of women in the prison system. What exactly is happening here, and why?

**Bibles**

*American Bible Society*, 1865 Broadway, New York, NY 10023

*Bible Alliance*, Inc. P.O. Box 621 Brandenton, FL 34206

*Gideons International*: Contact your local chapter.

*International Bible Society*, P.O. Box 35700, Colorado Springs, CO 80935

*International Prison Ministry*, P.O. Box 63, Dallas, TX 75221

*The Bible League*, 16801 Van Dam Road, South Holland, IL 60473

*Free Forever Prison Ministry*, Inc. P.O. Box 1073, New Haven, CT 06504 (Spanish only)

**Gospel Tracts**

*American Bible Society*, 1865 Broadway, New York, NY 10023

*American Tract Society*, P.O. Box 462008, Garland, TX 75046

*Bible Tracts*, Inc., Box 588, Normal, IL 61761

*Faith Prayer and Tract League*, 2624 Elmridge Drive N.W., Grand Rapid, MI 49504
Gospel Publishing House, 1445 Boonville Ave., Springfield, MO 65802

Gospel Tract Society, Box 1118, Independence, MO 64501

Last Days Ministries, P.O. Box 40, Lindale, TX 75711

Mid-Atlantic Tract Mission, Inc., P.O. Box 434, St. Charles, MO 63302

Osterhus Publishing House, 4500 W. Broadway, Minneapolis, MN 55422

Seminars Unlimited, PO Box 66, 403 East HWY 67, Keene, TX 76059

The Reapers, P.O. Box 791901, Dallas, TX 75379

World Wide Keswick, P.O. Box 1770, Largo, FL 33540

World Missionary Press, Inc., P.O Box 120, New Paris, IN 46553

Bible Study Courses

Amazing Facts - P.O. Box 1058, Roseville, CA 95678-8058, Phone: (916) 434-3880

Billy Graham Evangelistic Association Follow-up Department, P.O. Box 779, Minneapolis, MN 55440

Back to the Bible Correspondence School, P.O. Box 233, Lincoln, NE 68501

Campus Crusade for Christ, Arrowhead Springs, San Bernardino, CA. 92414

Discover Bible Study - Voice of Prophecy Bible School, PO Box 53055, Los Angeles, CA 90053

Hope Aglow Ministries, P.O. Box 3057, Lynchburg, VA 24503

Moody Correspondence School, 820 N. La Salle St., Chicago, IL 60610

Scripture Press Ministry, Miss Helen Gorges, P.O. Box 513, Glen Ellyn, IL 60138

Seminars Unlimited, PO Box 66, 403 East HWY 67, Keene, TX 76059

Videos

A six-part training series for jail and prison ministries is available through the Atlanta Chaplaincy Training School, P.O. Box 98368, Atlanta, GA 30359.

Born Again: The Story of Chuck Colson, former U.S. government official who was incarcerated and now heads an international prison outreach.
Coalition of Prison Evangelists (COPE) is a cooperative organization of many prison ministries across America that help promote training, materials and coordination of ministry. The address for this organization is: COPE, 2220 Regal Parkway, Euless, Texas 76040

Doing the Right Thing – hosted by Charles Colson: A panel of guests discussing the subject of ethics during six 30-minute DVD sessions.

Tex Watson: Testimony of former inmate.

The Hiding Place: The story of Corrie Ten Boone, incarcerated during World War II.

The Man With the Golden Arm (1955) – Drama, shows very forcibly the effects pre-prison friends have on a newly released prisoner’s desires to stay clean and straight.

The Power of Forgiveness (Documentary). Contact: Dan Juday, Tel: 703-519-8200 or visit www.journeyfilms.com.

Volunteers in Corrections, a training video available through the Industrial and Institutional Chaplaincy, 1445 Boonville Ave., Springfield, MO 65802.
APPENDIX E

SPIRITUAL SATISFACTION GROWTH ASSESSMENT SURVEY
# Spiritual Satisfaction Growth Assessment

Please fill out and return this survey before you leave the church today. As you complete this assessment, use this scale to respond to the first 4 statements:


For the 5th statement, use this scale to respond:


For the question #6, please answer with YES and NO.

For question 7-10, please use the same scale used for the first 4 statements.

Please mark ☑️ in the boxes that correctly describe your answer.

The survey is intended for church members or regular visitors 18 or older. Participation is voluntary and without any obligations. Please do not sign this form.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Seldom</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
<th>Always</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I share my faith in Christ with non-believers neighbors and friends.</td>
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<td>2. I regularly pray for non-believers I know.</td>
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<td>3. I intentionally maintain relationships with non-believers after I shared my testimony.</td>
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<td>4. I serve others expecting nothing in return.</td>
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<td>5. How satisfied are you with your spiritual life?</td>
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<td>6. I am participating or have participated in jail or prison ministry.</td>
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<td>7. I am involved in jail or prison ministry at my church or in affiliation with any other organization.</td>
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<td>8. Meeting with the inmates and ministering for them, provide a sense of purpose in my life.</td>
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<td>9. I encourage my church and friends to participate and/or support jail and prison ministry.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. While participating in a jail and prison ministry, I am satisfied with my spiritual life.</td>
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APENDIX F

SCRIPTURES RELATED TO PRISONERS
SCRIPTURES RELATED TO PRISONERS

Genesis 39:11-41:14: Joseph falsely accused of attempted rape and his experience in prison.

Genesis 42:15-20: Joseph imprisons his brothers.

Genesis 45:4-8: Joseph reveals himself to his brothers.

Numbers 21:1: King of Arad imprisons some of the Israelites.


1 Kings 22:27: Micaiah imprisoned because of his prophecy.

2 Kings 17:4: Hoshea, king of Israel imprisoned by the king of Assyria for being a traitor.

2 Kings 24:10-12: Jehoiachin, king of Israel, taken prisoner by Nebuchadnezzar.


2 Chronicles 16:7-10: Hanani the seer imprisoned by Asa King of Judah for giving a bad prophesy.

2 Chronicles 18:26: Micaiah imprisoned by Ahab, king of Israel, because of his prophecy.

Psalm 69:33: The Lord does not despise prisoners.

Psalm 79:11 and 102:20: A request for the Lord to preserve those condemned to die.

Psalm 146:7: The Lord sets prisoners free.

Isaiah 14:17: Satan does not allow his captives to go home.

Isaiah 24:21-22: The kings of the earth are imprisoned.

Isaiah 42:7: The foretelling of Jesus' coming to set free the captives in prison.

Isaiah 49:9: In the day of salvation the Lord will tell captives to come and those in darkness to be free.
Isaiah 53:8: Jesus' imprisonment foretold.

Isaiah 61:1: The proclamation of the Lord's anointed to announce freedom for prisoners.


Jeremiah 32:6-15: Jeremiah buys a field while in prison.

Jeremiah 33: The Lord speaks to Jeremiah while he is in prison.

Jeremiah 36:5: Jeremiah dictated the Lord's Word to Baruch during his imprisonment.

Jeremiah 36:26: Jehoiakim tries to have Jeremiah arrested.

Jeremiah 37:4-38:13: Falsely accused of desertion, Jeremiah is beaten and imprisoned.

Jeremiah 38:28: Jeremiah continues his imprisonment until Jerusalem is captured.

Jeremiah 40:1-4: Jeremiah is freed by the imperial guard.

Jeremiah 52:11: Zedekiah king of Jerusalem, blinded and imprisoned for life by the king of Babylon.

Jeremiah 52:31-34: Jehoiachin, King of Judah, released from prison by the king of Babylon.

Lamentations 3:34: God does not willingly crush prisoners.

Lamentations 3:53-55: Jeremiah pleads with God during his imprisonment.

Daniel 3:1-28: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego imprisoned, thrown into the furnace and rescued by God.

Daniel 6:16-24: Daniel thrown into the lion's den and rescued by the Lord.

Zechariah 9:11-12: God's promise to deliver prisoners.

Matthew 4:12: John the Baptist imprisoned.

Matthew 5:25-26: Advice that it is best to make peace with an adversary who is taking you to court. Otherwise, a prison term may be forthcoming.

Matthew 11:2: John the Baptist, who is in prison, asks Jesus if He is the One who was to come.

Matthew 14:3,10: John the Baptist imprisoned and beheaded.

Matthew 18:30: The unmerciful servant puts a man who owes him money into jail.

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Matthew 25:35, 39, 44: Jesus states that people who minister to those in prison are ministering to Him and that people who do not minister to those who are in prison have not ministered to Him.

Matthew 27:15-21: Barabbas released by the crowds.

Mark 1:14; 6:17,27: John the Baptist imprisoned and beheaded.

Mark 15:6: Barabbas released from prison.


Luke 4:18: Jesus states His calling, the fulfillment of Isaiah 61:1-3.


Luke 21:12-13: Jesus tells His disciples that they will be imprisoned on account of His name and that this would result in their being witnesses.

Luke 22:33: Peter declares he is ready to follow Jesus to prison and death.


Acts 4:3: Peter and John imprisoned.

Acts 5:18-23: The apostles imprisoned then freed by an angel of the Lord.

Acts 5:40: The apostles beaten for preaching the name of Jesus.

Acts 7:54-60: Stephen stoned to death.

Acts 8:3; 9:2,14,21: Saul persecuting Christians, his conversion and his ministry.

Acts 12:1-2: James, the brother of John, put to death by the sword at the command of Herod.

Acts 12:3-17: Peter imprisoned and released by an angel of the Lord.

Acts 12:18-19: Herod puts to death the guards who had been watching Peter.

Acts 14:19: Paul stoned by the crowd and assumed dead.

Acts 16:25-39: Paul and Silas beaten and imprisoned. An earthquake erupts, the prison doors fly open, the chains are loosed. The jailer accepts salvation and Paul and Silas are freed by the magistrates.

Acts 21:11: Agabus, a prophet, confirms that Paul will be imprisoned in Jerusalem.

Acts 21:30-35: The crowd in Jerusalem seizes Paul with the intention to kill him. Paul is saved by Roman soldiers.


Acts 23:1-35: Paul speaks before the Sanhedrin and is imprisoned.

Acts chapter 24: Paul's trial before Felix and his appeal to Caesar.

Acts chapter 25: Paul's trial before Festus.

Acts chapter 26: Paul's trial before Agrippa.


Acts 28:16: Paul allowed to live in his own house with a guard to watch him.

2 Corinthians 11:23: Paul talks about his imprisonments and hardships he has suffered for Christ.

Ephesians 3:1; 4:1: Paul states he is a prisoner of Christ.

Ephesians 6:20: Paul states he is an ambassador in chains.

Philippians 1:11-18: Paul states that his imprisonment has advanced the cause of Christ.

Colossians 4:10: Aristarchus is a fellow prisoner of Paul.

2 Timothy 1:8: Paul asks that people not be ashamed of his bondage in Christ.

2 Timothy 1:16-17: Paul blesses Onesiphorus for his ministry to him in prison.

2 Timothy 2:9: Paul says that although he is bound, the Word of God is not bound.

2 Timothy 4:16-17: The Lord stood by Paul's side when everyone else deserted him because of his imprisonment.

Philemon 1:9-10: Paul requests mercy for Onesimus who was saved in prison.

Philemon 1:23: Epaphras, a fellow prisoner of Paul.

Hebrews 13:3: Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners.

1 Peter 3:19: Christ ministers to those in prison.
2 Peter 2:4: God imprisoned the angels who revolted against Him.

Jude 1:6: God imprisoned the angels who revolted against Him.

Revelation 2:10: The devil will imprison some in order to test them.

Revelation 2:13: Antipas, God's faithful witness, put to death.

Revelation 20:7: Satan released from prison for a short time.
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VITA

Florin Liga

Personal Focus:

Born: April 18, 1965, Viziru, Romania

Spouse: Livia Pica Liga – MMus 2003, Andrews University

Children: Michael 9, Joseph 6

Ordination: August 2006, Illinois Conference

Education:

1989-1983 High School – Liceul Industrial Insuratei, Romania

1987-1990 School of Fine Arts – Choir Director, Ploiesti, Romania


1998-2002 MDiv from Andrews Theological Seminary

Experience:

2003-2012 Senior Pastor – Multi-church district

2005 & 2010 Media Producer – Photo and Internet, GC Sessions


2006-2010 Member of the Illinois Conference Evangelistic Committee

1998-2003 Manager of "Trio Celest" Music Ministry

2002 Music Coordinator for “The Galilean” NET, broadcasted in Europe

1997-1998 Director of Romanian Ministry and Music Coordinator, Arkansas-Louisiana Conference, Hot Springs, Arkansas