

The Florida Prison Evangelist

Gary Wyder
Prison Evangelist

"...He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners..." Luke 4:18

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LAKE BUTLER CHURCH OF CHRIST

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World Bible School goes to Jail

In March, 2011 Jim and Janie Hall from the Orange Street Church of Christ in Auburndale, Florida had the opportunity to serve a brother in Christ, who had made a bad mistake and was sent to jail in Polk County. Before that time, they had only done World Bible School (WBS) in other countries; in Ghana, West Africa and later in Nigeria. That work load became very heavy, with about 2500 students in each country.

By helping the jailed brother in Christ with his Bible studying, other inmates saw and heard his witness about the value of WBS. In the early days of the Polk County Jail Ministry (PCJ), meetings were in the attorney's booth, doing one on one studies. From these efforts there was only one baptism into our Lord, August 2013. He was a Spanish student who was sent to prison at Santa Rosa C. I. Annex, Milton, Florida.



On March, 2015 our Lord opened even wider the doors of opportunity when Jim and Brother Jack Pinckert were allowed to teach a Thursday Night Class at PCJ. Attendance went from 3 to 20 in 2015. From all these classes, there were 63 baptisms in 2015.

During the late summer, Brother Jack accepted a preaching position in Sarasota, Florida. Brother Glen Willcut, preacher at Eagle Lake Church of Christ, joined Jack in teaching the Thursday night class. They had much success, thanks to our Lord; the attendance has ranged from 7 to 32 with 45 baptisms this year and 15 more scheduled.

The number of Spanish students grew. Edwin and Maricel Marsach, of the Central Church of Christ in Haines City, interpret and grade their lessons. Edwin helps in the Thursday night teaching and baptizing. Jim gives all praise, honor and glory to our Lord, Jesus Christ for this opportunity to serve Him by serving others.

Contact Jim Hall at jhall4129@aol.com 904.507.9359

Grace in Deepest Waters

is the theme of the Alabama New Life Behavior workshop April 22-23 at the University Church of Christ in Montgomery, AL. As I hope you know, this workshop was changed from the date of March 25-26. A number of us from Florida attend and will make presentations.



Kyle Massengale, NLB Alabama Director pictured at left with NLB founder H.M. Motsinger, will present the Alabama Prison Reform Act Update. The State of Alabama

is reducing prison population with alternate sentencing and is seeking community organizations to assist with addiction and life skills classes. New Life Behavior courses fit the bill. This concept will be coming to other states. Contact Kyle at 956-975-8047, kdmassengale@att.net Their website is nlbnoa.org click on "2016 Workshop" for schedule, registration and motels with discounts for workshop.

The workshop starts Friday, April 22nd at noon with an evening banquet. Saturday begins at 8:00 A.M. and ends at 3:30 P.M. Speakers and classes address such topics as; working with addicts, how to support and not enable, beginning a new work, recruiting volunteers, identifying people's hurts and needs, community outreach methods and programs, transitional housing, and certification for New Life Behavior teachers.

43rd National Jail - Prison Ministry Workshop

More Than Conquerers June 8-10, 2016

This year the National Workshop will be held in Corpus Christi, TX. 2017 is in New Orleans, 2018 Kansas City. This is the "mother" of all jail/prison workshops and has workers from all over the US and even other countries.

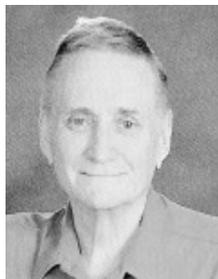
These workshops offer the best training, encouragement and sharing of good ideas that we all need. The networking that occurs benefits the attendees for years to come. Go to nlbm.org for registration, schedule and motel information.

Community Efforts For Your Congregation

is the topic of my session at the Alabama workshop. Many moons ago Bob Wachtel, elder at Windsor Park (now King's Crossing Church of Christ) related the impact the CASA (Christians Against Substance Abuse) class had on their congregation. The class was established to assist addicts released from jail or prison. Members observed tremendous growth in CASA attendees. Those who struggled silently with addictive behavior came "out of the shadows", and got the help they desperately needed. Many felt shameful about their addictions, afraid to share their struggles with church members. CASA broke that barrier. Freedom to share one's struggles bring healing.

Many in our communities and congregations are losing the battle against the many ugly manifestations of addiction. Reggie Bronson and Roy Johnson, of the Gray Road congregation in Cincinnati, spoke at a National Workshop of "Hurts, Habits and Hangups", a class they offered at Gray Road. Gary brought this information back to the Jail Doves (women doing jail ministry at the University congregation in Gainesville, FL where he and his wife Pat attend. The Jail Doves, Mary Lou Behnke, Bruce Simer and the elders were excited about this opportunity. The elders encouraged us to begin a weekly class.

B-12 (Bible based 12 step) had it first meeting on March 12, 2007. Six were in attendance. Attendance grew slowly, by 2009, an average of 12 attended. Following a model from Bill Hale and the North Atlanta congregation, University City began a Recovery Ministry under the oversight of elder Laurie Philpot. On February 8, 2009 a ministry coordinator, Bruce Simer was hired.



Bruce had years of sobriety and was well known and respected in the 12 step community. With his leadership and a great

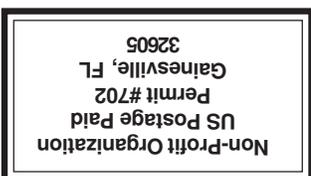
steering committee, B-12 attendance exploded. Bruce arranged for us to be able to pick up clients of local rehab programs and bring them to the B-12 meeting. Attendance of 50+ was not uncommon. Bible studies are now offered by several of our members at the rehab centers.

Attendees were overwhelmed by the love shown them. They asked to come to services and Bible studies. Conversions followed. It became necessary to develop spiritual mentors for each new Christian. The mentor does NOT replace one's sponsor, but rather supplements the spiritual component of one's recovery. Training classes were implemented. Members responded in great numbers as the Lord touched their hearts. University City lit up as with Jesus' love, compassion and servitude. A clothes closet was formed, pantry needs expanded as did other forms of benevolence. Converts from the recovery ministry grew and they began to mentor new members. That is a significant step in securing the future of the ministry.

Bruce's health is failing (pray for him) and in fall of 2014, the elders hired Ron McQuinn as recovery minister. Each congregation needs to be flexible in how they establish a similar outreach, but there are many models in the brotherhood and all are willing to assist your congregation develop their own.

Union Correctional had a record New Life Behavior graduation of 66 students of Course 10, *The Seeker Series*. It was the first time I taught that course. It really opened the eyes of many of the "religious" attendees. Individual studies are being set up as a result of that.

We have also had record attendance at our Sunday services at Union and weekly Bible study at Reception Center Work Camp. Please pray for the jail and prison ministry and for the 16 new converts of 2016. **To God be the glory!**



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