

OSL Connections

A Collaboration of Ministries working together to evangelize and disciple America's prisoners!

Issue 25

www.OperationStartingLine.net

May 31, 2008

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Current Events

Alabama Governor Says Churches, Not State, Must Rehab Prisoners

by Stan Diel
Religion News Service

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (RNS) Gov. Bob Riley on Tuesday (May 20) asked Alabama churches to shoulder the burden caring for newly released inmates, saying the state lacks the flexibility and funds to help them successfully re-enter society.

Leaders from churches and charitable groups were asked to provide a wide range of services to former inmates, including employment assistance, housing, clothing, health care and cash.

Riley said the state's churches can rise to the challenge as they do in response to natural disasters such as hurricanes.

"If we can motivate the faith-based community in the state the way we do during an emergency, then we can make a difference," Riley said to a group of about 500 people, mostly religious leaders.

Bill Johnson, director of the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs, said the state releases 11,000 inmates a year and isn't capable of providing the services necessary to help them readjust. Even if the state had the funds, such programs aren't popular with taxpayers,

he said.

The state will provide no direct funds to the program, called the Community Partnership for Recovery and Re-entry, but will coordinate the efforts of the churches and other volunteer groups.

"We're admitting we can't solve the problem," Johnson said.

At a meeting that vacillated between policy seminar and revival, Deborah Daniels, state director of Prison Fellowship Ministry, drew a chorus of "amens" when she said faith is a necessary component of rehabilitation.

"We allowed government to come in and take over what God's people are supposed to do," she said. "We talk about crime. But crime is sin. Apart from God, every child is troubled."

Vickie Locke, director of the new state program, told potential participants that they have an advantage operating outside of government. If a church wants to buy a car for a newly released inmate who lacks transportation, it can do so, she said. Government has to provide cookie-cutter solutions to sometimes complex problems.

In a written program overview distributed to religious leaders, the state suggested 80 ways churches can help, including everything from financial counseling to cash for emergencies. They also could mentor former inmates, provide day care for their children and help them write resumes.

Alex Luchenitser, senior attorney with Americans United for Separation of Church and State, said it's too soon to know whether the program will raise constitutional issues. But if the state government's involvement with the program ends with just referring inmates to churches, then it likely would pass constitutional muster.

"There's certainly nothing wrong with religious charities providing care for inmates and recently released inmates," he said.

Testimonies

Hope or Despair at Angola

Hope or despair. Redemption or retribution. Dignity or degradation. As I enter my fourth year as president of Oglethorpe University in Atlanta, these words may

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seem odd to be at the forefront of my thinking. While life as a college president is not easy, despair, retribution and degradation thankfully don't describe too many moments in my life. Then again, it's been only three years. No, these words are fixed in my mind not because of my day-to-day work, but rather because of a break from that work.

Two Oglethorpe alumni who have become dear friends invited my wife, my daughter and me to join them last weekend in prison: Angola Prison, part of the Louisiana State Penitentiary System. We were the outsiders on the trip, the other 40 travelers work in the Georgia State Prison System as wardens, chaplains or nurses and were visiting to learn how their own prison communities might become reflective of the ideals of hope, redemption and dignity.

Angola is infamous, both for what it was and what it has become. It's the place of *Dead Man Walking* and *Monster's Ball*. For decades, Angola was America's bloodiest prison and it remains the largest maximum-security prison in the country with 18,000 acres and over 5,200 inmates. Today, with sentencing laws among the harshest in America, the average sentence at Angola is 88 years. Of the 5,200 inmates, 3,600 are in for life with no parole. Ninety percent of those who pass through the gates of Angola will die there. If these numbers don't represent despair, retribution and degradation, I don't know what does.

Here we were, husband, wife and 16-year-old daughter, dropped among 5,200 inmates, mostly lifers, all of whom have committed very serious offenses – murder, armed robbery, aggravated sex crimes. Unless you've been to Angola you might chalk the rest of this story up to the tale of a do-gooder with his head in the sand, but it's the truth so help me God.

Our first night at Angola we wandered into a church at about 9:00 p.m., one of five churches now at Angola. The bell on this church is nearly 100 years old. The inmates love the bell and tell its story something like this: after it was created and before it had the chance to ring anywhere, it fell and killed a church member. The first time that bell ever rang was at Angola – the bell was a killer and now it's been redeemed, and they call it a born-again bell. As we entered the church, we passed one guard quietly sitting. There were maybe 100 or so felons scattered in the church pews with an inmate preacher up front. He stopped for a moment, welcoming us to their house, to God's house, and

urged us to sit among them in prayer. So we all sat shoulder-to-shoulder among the men. The next day, we joined inmates for a meal, again sitting side by side.

Picture this: my daughter, talking to a 40-year-old man who has spent half his life in Angola for murder, not scared, not even nervous. "It's odd," she said later, "It was just like talking to anyone else." For three days, I never heard one curse word, and I can't remember when that has ever happened. In fact I don't recall being among so many dignified men in my entire life, how can that be? How can men who have committed such serious crimes, locked away for life, maintain any shred of dignity.

That brings me to Warden Burl Cain. His job, as he sees it, is not to punish the men under his care. After three years, virtually no inmate receives a single visit in a year. His men are in jail for life. They have been punished. Society has locked them up. His job is to give them an opportunity to give back. "You have to do what you can where you are" says the warden. In a Christian world, there is always a chance for redemption -- hope and dignity.

Hope at Angola is everywhere, and it's not the hope of one day being released, since that almost never happens. Instead I believe it's the hope that comes with regaining one's dignity, through taking responsibility for one's acts, finding ways to take care of others, through God and through work. Everyone has a job at Angola. The newest inmate makes two cents an hour working the fields. A 15-minute call to his loved one costs \$6. That's 300 hours of work, or about eight weeks, for that phone call.

The violence at Angola is almost gone. Warden Cain says it's this simple: the thousands of men of God in his prison won't tolerate violence.

Hope and despair. Redemption and retribution. Dignity and degradation. All exist within the walls of Angola. And I am left in awe to have discovered that within such a place of despair lies so much dignity.

*Larry Schall, President of Oglethorpe University –
Used with permission*

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Partnership Principles

***One person seeking
glory doesn't accomplish much
everything we've done
has been the result of people
working together to meet
our common goals***

***Red Auerbach,
General Manager, Boston Celtics***

From: The Power of Partnership in the Church by John Maxwell

Collaborator Corner

Forgiven Ministry A Note to Kids

My name is Scottie Barnes. I wanted to have a very special page on our web site just for you. There is a reason that you are special to me. When I was four years old, I began going to prisons to visit my Daddy. When I was six years old, I was still going to prisons every weekend to visit my Daddy.

I know what it is like to sit in those big rooms and be quiet. There is always someone watching you so you have to be on best behavior. I remember getting so hungry, but there was nothing real good to eat, just crackers.

Sometimes Mom and Dad were not real happy with each other and I wished I could go play. I wished that our family could go for a walk outside, but the rules would not let us. I knew there had to be rules just like at school.

It was always sad to say goodbye even if we were coming back the next week. There were lots of kids like me who had a Mother or Daddy in prison. My prayer every night was: Jesus, please let my Daddy get out of prison and never go back. I did not want my friends to know about my family problems, but I am sure they did.

Daddy did get out, but not for long. When I was a teenager, he went to prison again. Now, I became very angry and thought that he did not love me and my Mother. Now I prayed: Jesus, help my Daddy to come home and to love me.

We all make choices and some of these are not good, so we have to pay a price for wrong choices. My Daddy made wrong choices and had to go to prison. He did not know Jesus and I began to want him to let Jesus into his heart. Many years passed and more times in prisons, but as I kept praying for my Daddy the anger left and I wanted to know Him more. Jesus heard my prayer and my Daddy asked Jesus into his heart. I prayed for 30 years for him to become a Christian.

Jesus is always our best friend who hears us each time we pray. He has a plan for each of us and in that plan is to give our life to Him. He hears and answers all our prayers in the best way. Jesus is never late or too early. I want to tell each of you that you are special and can be something special for Jesus.

Email us with your prayer request and know that Forgiven Ministry loves you. Guess what!! Now, I go into prison all the time telling men and women that God can change their life and make them a new person. Isn't that GREAT!

Jesus loves you and I do too,
Scottie

For more information on Forgiven Ministry go to:
www.forgivenministry.org

Here are some books that are fun to read for kids that have a mom or dad in prison.

When Andy's Father Went to Prison
by Martha Hickman

A Trip to the Big House
by Oliver Butterworth

Joey's Visit
by Donna Jones

***Just for You -
Children with Incarcerated Parents***
by Center for Children with Incarcerated Parents

My Mother and I Are Growing Stronger
by Inez Maury

***Two in Every Hundred: A Special Workbook for
Children with a Parent in Prison***
by Reconciliation, Nashville, TN

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I Know How You Feel Because This Happened To Me

by Center for Children with Incarcerated Parents

This list was found on the Family corrections Network website. Visit their site for more listings:
www.fcnetwork.org

In The News

Great Dads

Great Dads' vision is to help turn the hearts of fathers to their children - God's vision for fathers as expressed in Malachi 4:6. It has presented its training on "The 6 Basis of Being a Great Dad" to nearly 14,000 incarcerated fathers in over 280 prison seminars in the past 5 years. Karin Arango in the Southern California office has helped host a number of these through Angel Tree sign ups in the summer with good success in the past two years. The dads, PF volunteers who present many of these seminars, chaplains and wardens all love this training. Most important, many nonbelievers come to these seminars and over 8,000 of the incarcerated fathers have prayed to either receive Christ as Savior or to make Him Lord of their life. If you are interested in offering a seminar at a prison in your area, contact Virgil Whitaker at 703 764-1120 or GreatDadsSem@aol.com

Heart-Changing Trip to Angola

For the third straight time, HeartBound Ministries sponsored a bus trip to visit Angola Prison in Louisiana. We packed a fifty-five passenger bus with Georgia wardens, chaplains, prison staff and HeartBound Ministries folks for three days in April to this most unlikely and special place. It's a place that used to be the bloodiest prison in America, but now it overflows with born-again men, virtually all lifers, who have restored dignity and hope through Jesus Christ. This was supposed to be our last trip, but it is just too in-demand to stop! HeartBound Ministries will sponsor another trip there in October because visiting Angola is changing the way Georgia prisons operate. Here's a case in point.

One Georgia chaplain writes, *"After returning from Angola, the Warden insisted upon buying a lighted cross to go above the door leading into the chapel. It is going to be 2' tall, and the cross members will be 11" wide. It will light up a Thomas Kincade picture of a*

chapel and a very serene village! It will say in beautiful letters, "All things are possible with God."

The Warden said in this morning's staff meeting that he got the idea from the dedication service at Angola. He went on to say that he wanted the inmates to be able to lie in their bunks and see the lighted cross above the door of the chapel. Isn't that the neatest thing you ever heard?"

Retrieved from Heartbound Ministries May newsletter

OSL Conferences / Calls

OSL Conference Call

***– Tuesday, August 19 at 3:00 pm (EST)
Phone Number: 866-430-0397
Code: 9105839***

OSL Face to Face Meeting

***– Thursday, October 9 in Denver, CO
(with Colorado OSL project)***

OSL Project Schedule

2008

Florida – May 29 – June 1 & June 6 – 8
Colorado – June 6
Tennessee – June 6-8, 2008 (proposed)
New Mexico – September 12-14
Colorado – October 8-12
Arizona – November

2009

Michigan – May (tentative)

Contact Larry Tucker on information on future OSL projects.

OSL Event Standard

The following items outline what constitutes an OSL event. These items must be included to be called an "OSL Event."

1. An OSL collaborator serves as the initiator sponsor and lead project coordinator to ensure project quality and consistency

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2. The project involves a minimum of three OSL collaborators
3. The project sponsor will include the appropriate OSL Committee Chairperson (s) in project planning based upon the project objectives and needs.
4. The project must incorporate the OSL Goals of evangelism, discipleship and collaboration
5. The evangelism component incorporates the "Five Points of the Gospel" developed by BGEA **or** an approved evangelism presentation reviewed by the Evangelism Committee
6. Each project meets minimum event planning / quality standards. This includes:
 - a. "Do's / Don'ts" volunteer training for consistency and safety
 - b. "Running the Race" booklets provided by Crossroad Bible Institute
 - c. Participant tracking
 - d. Result tracking
 - e. Promotion as an OSL event (sponsored by)
 - f. Placement on the OSL Project calendar maintained on the OSL website.
7. OSL Projects must be approved by the full OSL collaboration in a regularly scheduled meeting **or** by the Executive Committee if such project needs approval in a timely fashion outside of the regular scheduled meetings.
8. Each project will include a post-project evaluation with project results communicated to all. Notify Larry Tucker or Phyllis Cappalonga (Evangelism Committee Chairperson) of future projects / events.

OSL General Information

Collaborator Information:

Contact Larry Tucker at 479-464-0465 or at Larry_Tucker@pfm.org for collaborator contact information. Go to the OSL Website for links to collaborators websites.

General Information:

Go to: www.operationstartingline.net

Media Information:

News media type information on OSL can be found on: www.demosnewspond.com/OSL

Prayer Information:

If you know of friends or associates who are willing to invest periodic prayer into the work of OSL, send their

names and E-mail addresses to IFA via the e-mail address below. OSL prayer alerts are available via E-mail.

PO Box 915, Purcellville, VA 20134
1-800-USA-PRAY / osl@ifapray.org
Fax 540-751-0984

Newsletter Collaborator Focus:

May – Fellowship Riders, Forgiven Ministry
June – Good News Jail and Prison Ministry, Great Dads

OSL Fund Information:

Purpose:

The fund is intended to be an independent place to hold funds for joint projects of OSL and any OSL organization can voluntarily raise funds for OSL projects or the OSL Fund.

Recent Recommendations:

- Continue to support the 'OSL Fund' with funds primarily used for the purchase and distribution of Bibles and OSL literature materials for inmates, their families and the prison community.
- Where possible, collaborators who sponsor materials utilize matching grants to multiply the impact of the OSL Fund. This process is presently being used by IBS – STL for Bibles.
- Include OSL fund requests as part of regular giving requests or in a special appeal. This process is used by several OSL collaborators.

OSL Fund Address:

Contributions to the OSL Fund go to:
IBS Foundation, Attention OSL Fund

Attn: Rich Blanco

1820 Jet Stream Drive
Colorado Springs, Colorado 80921-3696

Collaborator Key Events:

For a listing of Collaborator key events go to:
www.bgcprisonministries.org

Please contact the Billy Graham Center Institute for Prison Ministry at IPM@wheaton.edu to post your key ministry events and conferences.

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Information Websites

1. **Restorative Justice Community** - www.rjcusa.org
Note there are individual state RJC communities such as:
www.rjctexas.org
www.rjcmichigan.org
2. **International Network of Prison Ministries** - www.prisonministry.net
3. **Center for Children of Incarcerated Parents** - www.e-ccip.org
4. **CharityNavigator.org**
5. **Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability** - www.ECFA.org
6. **Office of Justice Programs** - www.ojp.usdoj.gov
7. **Re-Entry Policy Council** - www.reentrypolicy.org
8. **Restorative Justice Ministries Network** - www.rjmn.net
9. **Here's Life Inner City Ministries** - The Compassionate Urban Ministry of Campus Crusade for Christ - www.hlic.org and <http://www.hlic.org/prison.htm>.
10. **Billy Graham Center Institute for Prison Ministry (resource database)** - www.bgcprisonministries.com
11. **Christian Association for Aftercare** - www.capaassociation.org
12. **National Institute for Corrections** - www.nicic.org
13. **Family & Corrections Network** - www.fcnetwork.org
14. **The National Council on Crime and Delinquency** - www.nccd-crc.org
15. **National H.I.R.E Network** - www.hirenetwork.org
16. **Prison Fellowship Justice Fellowship** - www.justicefellowship.org
17. **National Clearinghouse on Families and Youth** - <http://ncfy.acf.hhs.gov>
18. **Bureau of Justice Statistics** - www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs
19. **Prison Aftercare Network (Wisconsin)** - www.prisonaftercare.net
20. **Volunteers of America** - www.volunteersofamerica.org
21. **Justice Fellowship** - www.justicefellowship.org
22. **Church of the Nazarene Compassionate Ministry Centers** - www.missionstrategy.org > Compassion
23. **Colorado DOC FORGES prisoner support program** - <https://exdoc.state.co.us>