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Christmas 2007

At the end of yet another year, I echo the words of a missionary friend of ours in East Africa who began his year end letter like this; *"It hard to believe that we are that the end of another year. This has been a very full and active year for me and I look back with a real sense of gratitude to God for the privilege of being able to share in so many interesting and challenging activities. Being involved in the ministry of God's Kingdom is just great."*

"Seek the Lord and live" Amos 5: 6

The Wise Still Seek Him

Gratitude

*"I have had a really bad week. As you know I am HIV positive, this week my lab results showed that my T-cells are down, I got very depressed. **But** I am not blaming God, because I know that it is due to my irresponsible lifestyle that I got infected in the first place.*

*I have so much to thank God for, due to Alpha, I have come to know God, my sins are forgiven through Jesus. I can see the transformation that God is doing in me. For this reason I can **still rejoice in the Lord.**"*

That comment made by a young woman in my small group at York C I last week, is only one example of why we, in the ministry of Free Inside, rejoice in the privilege God has given us to be involved this ministry in spite of the many challenges we often face.

Our volunteers

The wonderful men and women called by God into this ministry are worth their weight in gold. Each brings their own unique personalities and gifts with them, but above all they bring the love of the Lord Jesus Christ with them. It would be

difficult to persevere in this ministry without loving people as Christ loves them. Some of our volunteers have faced challenges this Fall.

A number have faced health concerns themselves and in their families, but like good soldiers of the cross they have endured and have continued to serve. Look on the back of the page for an interesting perspective from one of our volunteers.

Faithful Donors

Every Christian ministry faces the challenge of raising support for ministry. I am so grateful for the churches and individuals who give financially to Free Inside. Your gifts make it possible for the lives of men and women in prison to be reached by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I am especially grateful that I have been able to receive a regular stipend from the ministry.

The Purpose Driven Life

The special appeal for extra funds to purchase copies of this very influential book raised more than the \$1,000 asked for. I have ordered 600 in English and 200 in Spanish. There is still \$200 over for buying others as the need arises. Thank you all who gave to this fund.



Alpha Advisors Conference

At the end of October, I was privileged to attend a conference for Alpha advisors in Fairfax VA, I learned a lot and was glad to meet and fellowship with some of the

dedicated men and women who serve as Alpha advisors to churches.

Alpha continues to spread in the USA, in churches and in what I call *"speciality Alpha courses"*. Speciality courses are for Prisons, the Military, Colleges, Youth, Seniors (a number of churches do courses in retirement homes.)

A Young Iraq War Veteran

Last week I prayed with S. a 19-year old inmate who served 9 months in Iraq. He struggles to sleep, due to vivid pictures that plague his mind of the carnage he saw in Iraq, among civilians and US servicemen, especially of friends killed and maimed in his sight.

He is a deeply wounded young man who is struggling to believe that God can forgive him for shooting and killing people in the line of duty.

I gave him a Bible, the booklet *"Why Jesus?"* and a copy of the *"Purpose Driven Life"* Pray for S. Pray that the Holy Spirit will help him to accept God's forgiveness in Christ. Pray that he will be freed from the visual flashbacks that keep him awake at night.

Gordon Lawrence a Free Inside board member & Volunteer writes about his impressions of the ministry

A ministry of many Surprises

I have been a volunteer since the inception of **Free Inside**, and this is my first experience with prison. My time has been full of surprises, but also a rich and rewarding experience.

- ❖ **My first surprise** was that inmates look much like I do.
- ❖ **My second surprise** was how open the inmates are. Our discussions are among the most open and intense that I have ever participated in.

Most small group discussions in churches, seldom reach such a level of openness. Very often inmates talk openly about their lives, and use their own experiences to illustrate points in the group discussion. *Interestingly, most freely admit their guilt.*

- ❖ **Another surprise for me was working with Catholic volunteers**, who I discovered loved the Lord in the same way that I do. Many Catholic inmates come to Alpha testifying how the Lord has met them in the Catholic services and studies that they had been attending. I confess that I found that surprising, but I have been forced to admit that God often works where I did not expect.

I hear many sad and tragic stories from the men I minister to.

- ❖ **Yet another surprise is that prison ministry has been** a very humbling experience. I have found genuine faith behind bars and have seen a genuine desire to live the Christian life both on the inside and on the outside when released. I have been humbled by the gratitude from inmates for the volunteers who come to share Christ with them.

I am concerned for all I meet as to how they will survive on the outside. When they leave, who will their friends be?

One inmate from broken home who said he was twenty-one, told me that he had to make sure he never saw his father again. When I asked why, he said whenever he visited his father, his father filled him with alcohol and gave him drugs.

How they will find jobs? Who is anxious to employ an ex-convict? Will their families reject them, rejection by family members is not uncommon.

Living the Christian life is never easy, but the ex-convict has additional problems just to survive. Some have never worked, at least at anything legal. **They need our prayers.**

We do our utmost to work with the chaplains, their support is essential for our work. In turn we seek to support them in their ministry, they work faithfully in very difficult circumstances.

The Chaplains we have met all have great hearts, but they often endure many disappointments.

Please pray that God will work in the in lives of Connecticut's 20,000 inmates.

Your tax-deductible gifts in support of the ministry of Free Inside may be mailed to:
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P O Box 341
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Questions about our ministry? send us an email freeinside@cox.net or go to www.free-inside.com



Alpha
Behind Bars



An Intercessory Prayer Team urgently needed for Free Inside.

God has been challenging me with the fact that I have not been as faithful in prayer as I should. I know that no effective spiritual work can be done without prayer. Yet, I confess my own weakness in this area.

One of the greatest preachers in the 20th. Century, Dr. Martyn-Lloyd Jones, was asked at the end of his life; "If you could live your life over again, what would you do differently?" He answered simply, "Pray more"

I am aware you do pray for our ministry. However, some of you might sense that God is calling you to be part of a special intercessory prayer team.

What is involved?

- ❖ **A regular prayer bulletin.** I will send those who join this team a special prayer bulletin once or twice a month, with items for prayer.
- ❖ **Confidentiality.** Very occasionally items may be tagged as "Confidential" Any such item must not be shared with anyone else, anywhere.
- ❖ **I cannot state too strongly** the importance of maintaining confidentiality *breaching confidentiality could jeopardize the whole ministry.*

Let me know if you are willing to join this special intercessory prayer team.

Please call me to let me know at (860) 633-4085 or email me at freeinside@cox.net