In the next couple of newsletters, we want to paint a picture of finding faith in prison, building while at New Person Ministries, and maintaining faith while living independently. Hopefully, this conveys the experiences of the many men who come through our doors.

At one time or another we have all felt the push to run toward God in times of trouble and despair only for that feeling to wane when the pressure of the circumstance subsides or is rectified. Many times, it is exactly that - a feeling - which waxes and wanes instead of the genuine experience which comes from an all-encompassing surrender to the reality that we cannot do anything to save ourselves, pay the price of sin, or redeem the circumstances which have come upon us or that we created.

No clearer is this seen than by those who have come to faith or who have recommitted their hearts to the Lord while behind bars. Likewise, no more is the meaning of Galatians 3:22 felt when it states: “But the Scriptures declare that we are all prisoners of sin, so we receive God’s promise of freedom only by believing in Jesus Christ.”

Miguel P says that another inmate prod- ded him to attend the prison chapel ser-

vice. There he felt the power of God touch him and begin the healing work in his life, which remains strong to this this day. Miguel credits the Lord using Chaplain Hansard at SCI Ben-nner for his strong and deliberate walk of faith as he mentored the incarcerated men in his care. Miguel says that it was his example that reinforced in the men that they must be prepared to walk with the Lord for a lifetime, not just until their dis-

charge date, despite the ups or downs that come in life. Miguel says that, as the Word of God states, we continue to work out our salvation daily by choosing to stay in fel-

lowship and daily asking for the grace to re-

fect less of our-selves and more of Him!

He saw the Lord’s hand at work at each step in his journey through incarceration.

Already a believer before his prison time, Jayson D saw the Lord’s hand at work at each step in his journey through incarceration. The Lord placed believers around him who were like a healing presence at each place he stayed. Jayson told of the Lord using in-

FINDING FAITH IN PRISON cont. on p. 2
AmazonSmile will donate 0.5% of every purchase that you make on their site to New Person Ministries Inc. They will continue to do this each time you shop at AmazonSmile. To set it up, go to the following link, which is specifically for NPM:


Shopping at AmazonSmile is the same as shopping at Amazon...but with a built-in donation to NPM.

“I like that I can contribute to NPM while I shop. The items I buy don’t cost a penny more, but I can do a little bit of good with my purchasing dollars. If you are computer savvy enough to shop online, you are savvy enough to get this set up. If not, just ask someone to help you!”

- an anonymous NPM supporter

Do you Shop at Amazon?

Juan is a vocalist on Zion’s Worship Team.

Juan V explains that he knew of God and came from a supportive Christian family from Puerto Rico who earnestly prayed for him. However, it was in the time that he had to reflect, read, and meditate on the Word of God in prison that God was truly able to penetrate his heart. Also, Juan was able to connect with other imprisoned believers who encouraged each other’s faith. He says that it is staying in a supportive church environment and in fellowship with other believers that helps him through his journey of faith.

It’s not uncommon to see green growing between cracks in the pavement. There is no place that is too dark, too hard, too hopeless that the Lord cannot penetrate. Where there is despair, the Lord brings hope.

Juan is a vocalist on Zion’s Worship Team.

Clergy Corner

Restoring Individuals like Jesus Did

Sometimes, people get into trouble. Sometimes they fall into sin. That is a consequence of being human. In society, people who get caught deal with the legal system. This can mean detention and prison time.

There is an ongoing discussion about the purpose of prison. Some say it is for punishment, others say it is for rehabilitation. Most people believe it should be a combination of both. I’m on the side of rehabilitation. I believe that God wants to redeem and restore lives that have gotten into trouble. Jesus didn’t come to condemn, but to save (John 3:17).

When sin happens in society, the courts deal with it. The American judicial and penal system isn’t perfect. Sometimes it gets things wrong. When sin happens to Christians, the church also deals with it. The church isn’t perfect either. The difference is that we follow a perfect Savior.

Many churches use Jesus’ words in Matthew 18 as a basis for dealing with sin. It has a nice progression, moving from personal to impersonal. Many people don’t like the way it ends up: “treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector” (Mt. 18:17). I prefer to understand that the progression ends up with a personal treatment. After all, it is a former tax collector who wrote these words. Jesus taught us how we should treat pagans and tax collectors. We should love them and encourage their salvation.

This is why I appreciate NPM. It deals with individuals on a personal basis. It seeks to facilitate the rehabilitation and restoration process. I believe that is truly a ministry of Jesus.

Those who enter the NPM program are gently “obligated” to attend church for the first three months out of prison. I have come to see the NPM men as a blessing to the congregation I am serving. They continually help us to visualize how God works in a repentant life.

Some people stop too soon when applying Matthew 18. We need to read at least to verse 20 where Jesus reminds us, “where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.” As we live and serve in the presence of Jesus, we will show unconditional love and seek the best for others as we gather in His name.

Pastor Steve Crane
Interim Pastor,
Zion Mennonite Church
COVID-19 and the resulting quarantine has made a lot of people feel like they have been imprisoned. For those who have served time, it is difficult to listen to others complaining about feeling imprisoned. It is especially difficult for those who have been held in solitary confinement.

If you want to feel what it is like to be in solitary confinement, take a sleeping bag and put it in the bathtub. Leave all technology outside of the room. Now go inside and shut the door. Have someone bring you breakfast at 5 am, lunch at 10 am, and dinner at 4 pm. You cannot have any extra food in your bathroom. You are only allowed out of your bathroom for a 30-minute period, and you cannot use your technology during that period. Does this sound like something you could do?

Most people would say that this seems harsh just for one day. Imagine the men and women around the country who have been in solitary confinement for weeks, months, and even years. Serving time in a lot of prisons in the US is already cruel, but imagine the added cruelty of this punishment.

Solitary confinement is not only used for the most incorrigible, but many people are in solitary confinement for something as minor as disobeying a direct order from a corrections officer. It is a very harsh punishment for the offense.

New York State has recently passed a bill to ban solitary confinement because of the cruelty and the mental health toll that it takes on a person. Humans are relational beings who are not meant to be locked up in a cage like an animal. We need interactions with people, so imagine what happens when you are stripped of that interaction.

The movie Just Mercy shows a perfect example of what some people do to avoid the monotony of solitary confinement. Anthony Ray Hinton, portrayed by O’Shea Jackson Jr., used his imagination to think about being anywhere other than in solitary confinement. This is a practice that is used by many and helps preserve someone.

The United Nations has decreed that more than 15 consecutive days in solitary confinement is cruel and unusual punishment. Solitary confinement is not only used for the most incorrigible, but many people are in solitary confinement for something as minor as disobeying a direct order from a corrections officer. It is a very harsh punishment for the offense.

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Grace that Transforms Us

In March, our nation saw the carnage that Robert Aaron Long left behind after entering multiple massage parlors and murdering eight people in the Atlanta area. He claimed it wasn’t about race but was about sexual addiction. A formerly devoted member of his church, Long struggled with sexual addiction, and the shame drove him, in part, to commit such heinous acts.

Around the same time, I met with a man who struggled with sexual addiction. I had only recently met him but could already see that his sexual addiction was going to ruin his life as he knew it. I don’t know how long he had struggled alone. Not long after, I had another conversation with an old friend as he talked about the toll that his sexual addiction was taking on his marriage, his family, and his life.

Growing up, I read Breakaway magazine and read books like I Kissed Dating Goodbye. I remember multiple seminars, youth rallies, and other gatherings themed around staying far away from any kind of sexual sin. Once a speaker said that more important than finding the line not to cross was just staying incredibly far away from it to begin with.

I want to be clear that I do believe sexual ethics are important. I see the long-lasting consequences and think it is a part of right living. However, what was drilled in my head constantly was the prevention of potential sins—the message was never about grace. I also heard very little about all the other parts of living a Christlike life. Where were seminars on acting justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with our God in a practical manner? I believe this has helped create a culture of shame around sexual addiction that has caused people to feel like they have to walk alone.

How differently would Robert Aaron Long have acted if people around him preached grace in his ear on a daily basis? If my friends had not dealt with their sexual addiction by themselves and had other people around them, would they be at a different point in life now? Our purity culture has put such an emphasis on sexual morality that it becomes an automatic disqualifier for any sort of church position. I pray that we drag the darkness into the light and heal these wounds with the loving grace of Christ that doesn’t just overlook our sins but transforms us.

Reentry Bags

Many of the residents of New Person Ministries lack basic hygiene necessities when they come out of prison. A great way for individuals, small groups, churches, etc. to get involved is to assemble reentry bags that NPM can hand out to residents when they arrive.

Contact Jordan Kauffman at 717-917-9498 or jrkauff1@gmail.com if interested in dropping off completed bags.

Items for Men’s Reentry Bags

All items should be new.

- Body wash or bar of soap
- Shampoo
- Conditioner
- Shaving razors
- Shaving cream
- Comb
- Toothbrush (individually packaged)
- Toothbrush holder or cap
- Toothpaste
- Deodorant
- Body lotion
- Lip balm
- Pair of warm socks
- Washcloth
- Towel
- Emery board
- Fingernail clippers
- Small backpack or drawstring bag (to put items in)

New Person Ministries welcomes your financial support. Visit our website to make a donation online. Checks can be written out to “New Person Ministries” and mailed to:

NPM
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Reading, PA 19607

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