

Free Inside
A Christian Prison Ministry
A Partner with Vision New England Prison Ministries
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Free Inside News – June 2005.

News flash!!! 5 professions of faith during spring Session at York C I. We are aware of 5 women who professed personal faith in Jesus Christ during the spring session. Please pray for them.

Spotlight on our in-prison volunteers.

We currently have 31 folk who are active in or waiting to get started in prison ministry; 16 are women, 15 are men all ranging in age from 29 – 80. They represent 8 denominations and 18 different congregations. Free Inside is truly an example of Christian ecumenical co-operation. Drawn together into this ministry by the twin motives of:

- the command of Jesus to make disciples of all nations and
- by the compassion of Jesus for the lost and needy, “When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.” Matthew 9: 36

It is important that our volunteers are able to work alongside Christians of other denominations and traditions. For this reason we encourage them to serve in the spirit of the well known dictum of Augustine of Hippo: “In essentials unity, in non-essentials freedom, in all things love” Another version attributed to Chrysostom, says “In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things Jesus Christ.” I am very happy that God has provided Free Inside with volunteers who are able to do this. They are a witness to the injunction “Live in harmony with one another.” Romans 12: 16.

From their personal experience our volunteers say . . .

“Prison Ministry has had a humbling effect on me. My walk with God has become more personal and satisfying. Also, the other volunteers are an encouragement to me.”

Questions and answers from volunteers

1. What comments have you heard from inmates regarding their experience of Alpha?

- *“I have been looking forward to this all day”*
- *“I’m very thankful for the Alpha program”*
- *“I wish others here would come to this program”*

2. What has been the most encouraging aspect of prison ministry to you?

“Witnessing the growth of the men in their faith, knowing that their chances on the outside have been increased due to this ministry.”

3. What would you say to someone who is thinking of volunteering but is unsure or nervous about getting involved?

“I would tell them that the rewards are truly heavenly”

*“For me, The whole experience of prison ministry was a personal. I grew more in sharing the Word. **Working with others on the ministry team was a terrific experience.** Seeing the inmates’ hunger to grow in God’s word, and their personal walk was a blessing. The Alpha program is an awesome tool to use to reach others. Many commented on how much they looked forward to each session and the outlines provided of each study. The discussion groups were especially important, they were able to ask questions in a safe environment and to express themselves without ridicule.*

“I would encourage others to join us in ministering to those in prison, with Christ’s love. I was nervous before I started but “with God all things are possible” and with the support of Peter and the team it is a win-

win for all.”

*“I assure you, that you will get much more out of it than you put into it. I have no doubt that it has made me stronger in my walk with the Lord. Jesus said: said: "I was in prison and you came to visit me!" **It takes you out of your "Bubble"** It's a "WIN" "WIN" for everyone. What is more encouraging than to plant seeds & guide someone to follow the Lord?”*

Thanksgiving

- For those who came to faith during the spring courses. (There were others not mentioned in the news flash)
- For each of our volunteers
- For the open doors into prisons
- For 3 recent opportunities to speak to church groups about prison ministry

Prayer Needs

- For each participant who came to faith during our spring courses.
- For our volunteers, that they will be physically and spiritually refreshed by the time the Fall courses begin.
- For the new volunteers that I will be training this summer.
- More openings into prisons. I am praying that we will be able to start in 2 more prisons this Fall

Vision New England Prison Ministries. Mark Hemenway the director of VNE prison Ministries and the VNE Prison Field Staff (I am the CT staff member) are working on an aftercare program to facilitate ex-offenders re-entry into the community.

- Pray for the development of this project
- Pray that the Lord will raise up many churches in New England who will be will to participate in a program like this.

Vision New England and its various ministries exist to serve the Churches of New England and to assist them in developing ministries to reach people for Christ. Prison Ministry is just one of these outreach efforts.

Financial Needs

There are times when it is necessary to speak about the financial needs of ministry. The development of Free Inside and my work with Vision New England means that the financial needs are growing as well. In the last 6 months I have traveled 11,000 miles for the ministry alone. I am still \$1000 per month short of my fund raising goal. I would like to appeal to those of you who are not yet giving to Free Inside to consider a monthly commitment. **Perhaps you could also ask your church to consider supporting our ministry.**

Please note that all Vision New England Field Staff receive no direct funding from VNE, all of us are required to raise our own ministry and living expenses.

Peter