



PROTESTANT CHAPLAINCY MINISTRY

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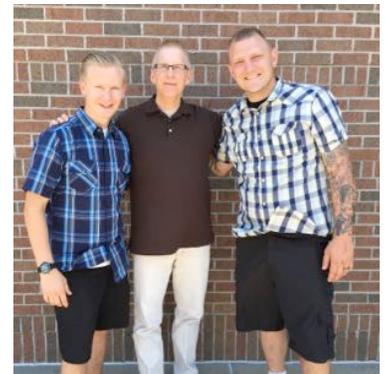
Winter 2016

At the beginning of November I showed a short video about Olympic Gold Medalist Michael Phelps at all four of my church services. He had become suicidal after a DUI arrest and then reached out to a Christian friend for help. That same friend gave him a copy of the book *Purpose Driven Life* that really got through to him during his 45-day stay in a rehab program. A friend of Chaplain Steve Matten donated a case of the books and I challenged the youth to take the next forty days to read it. Everyone who attended church that weekend took a copy except two youth. Some youth have really taken it serious and we will see how the Lord ends up using the experience.



Miguel got out of prison a year ago and completed 52 consecutive weeks of his required parole classes in record time. He could only invite one person to his graduation and I was given the honor. Each class has its own motto (There is always a light at the end of the tunnel) and mural (see photo). Miguel has gone from reporting daily to his parole officer to only once or twice a month. I was told that only 5% of the parolees who start this program end up finishing it without some type of violation. One of the parole administrators spoke and said, "The sooner you get off parole, the sooner you can give us back your CDC number."

In July I flew to Kansas to visit Michael and McKenna Place but before I left, I was contacted by Daniel Anderson through Facebook who had been at the Youth Guidance Center about ten years ago. He was surprised to hear of my trip and arranged to meet with me. Daniel had a serious drug addiction and finally left the state a few years ago to start over in Wichita. Today he is married, raising three boys, has a well paying job, and attends a good church. When he and Michael met, they found out that both of them had attended the same high school in Huntington Beach. While I was there I arranged a tour of the Juvenile Hall facility and found out that Youth for Christ is allowed to have a similar ministry to ours. Michael had already been invited a couple times by one of their volunteers to share his testimony.



On April 30th several churches came together to sponsor a Peace and Unity Rally at Jerome Park in Santa Ana. The rally was in response to the increased gang violence that had plagued the city since the beginning of the year. It was encouraging to see city officials get up on the stage to acknowledge God and humbly ask for prayer to deal with the problem. I was also blessed to recognize many people from various churches at the rally who I have ministered with over the years. In-between the times of prayer and speeches were Christian rapping. Three out of the four rappers were former gang members I had met with in Juvenile Hall and are now being used to promote peace instead of violence.

About a year ago I was contacted by a high school student named Vicky who wanted to put on an Art Show with artwork created by incarcerated youth. She had made several calls and I was the first person willing to help her. While talking to Vicky I thought about the various pieces of art that have been given to me over the years so I sent her a picture of what I could provide and she was pleased. The Art Show was a community service project needed to get her gold badge with the Girl Scouts. Only a handful of select girls actually reach that level and attend a National Ceremony to be recognized. After calling around she was able to locate Art Share LA in Los Angeles who allowed her to use the site on a Saturday afternoon in March at a discounted price. The pieces of artwork hung around the space with Christmas lights strung above while music played in the background. Vicky mentioned that the picture of Jesus drawn by Adrian Martinez was the favorite of the show.



Thank you for your part in making my ministry possible and please take time to enjoy the upcoming holiday season. May the Lord bless you.



Chaplain Rick,

Thanks for your letter. It brought up my spirits because I feel like life outside this place doesn't exist. Happy to hear other inmates are now serving God. The last couple months have been difficult and I haven't been dwelling on the Lord, which is probably the problem. I want to be grateful and able to trust in God but my faith is almost non-existent. Is this normal? Besides that, my court case is actually getting better. I have a new defender and the judge has been replaced. If you have any advice please let me know. I have been drawing non-stop in here and getting great at black and white portraits. My birthday was good and I had my first jail made churro.

EH

Rick,

I am adjusting to this place pretty well. I'm in a six-man cell. Your birthday card made my day. I'll save your phone number and call you after my next court date. I kind of like it here being able to shower longer and exercise a lot but I do miss the food and free phone calls. There is non-stop noise all day but at 11:00 pm it quiets down. My Bible made it through but then another officer took it away and put it in my personals. Thanks for the calendar too.

FM

Rick,

Thank you for the pictures of me and the Christmas card. Right now I am learning to play the guitar (so I can catch up to you). My instructor says I have rhythm. I was looking through my old court papers and saw the letter you wrote to the judge. It said you thought I lacked common sense. Do you still feel that way? I was a lost kid back then, huh? I have grown to realize how grateful I am to have an awesome brother in Christ like you. Have a blessed birthday and hope to hear from you soon.

CM

Rick,

Enclosed is a card I drew for you (See Fall Newsletter). Hope you like it. I still remember the first day I met you when I was at YGC. It was by the handball court and I gave my life to Christ. You have been a true friend. If you see Laura and Margie, send them my love too. I really like the way your letters are done and I share them with other inmates. To hear what is being done for the Lord is inspiring. A friend of mine really needs a Spanish Bible. Do you know how he can get one?

CM

Chaplain Rick,

It has been a few years since we last spoke. It was when you came to see me in Theo Lacy. I went to trial in February 2013. I lost my case and was sentenced to 45 years to life in prison. I recently lost my appeal so I have till February 2017 to get into the Federal Court. I see from your letter that you are staying busy out there. Thank you for taking the time to write me. There are a lot of "us" and you have touched our lives. I have been struggling a long time and the first person I think to turn to is you.

JB

Chaplain Rick,

I have been wanting to call you especially after my brother's visit. He came to tell me that my dad passed away. My dad got deported a long time ago and my family was able to get his body brought to the US for burial. I'm sure you're wondering how I am doing. Thanks to God for being my strength, comfort, and rock so I am at peace. I knew that I would be hearing bad news while I am serving my time so I prepared myself for those times. I also wanted to tell you that I finally signed my time and will be getting sentenced on the first of December but won't leave for prison until after a restitution hearing in February.

AM

Chaplain Rick

Thank you for being there when I was locked up in Juvenile Hall and feeling hopeless and lonely. You showed me the good things that I am capable of doing if I will worship God and go to church. My goal is to become a good person one day.

JT

Proverbs 12:25

"An anxious heart weighs a man down but a kind word cheers him up."

Released Youth

Glad to hear you still go to YGC because what you do changes lives.

Mentee

I just want to let you know I'm thankful for you! You're a great blessing to my life!

PCM Volunteer

Thank you for the stories and photos of the youth in your prayer letter but most of all for being in their lives and encouraging all of us to pray.

Parent of Deceased Youth

My son really liked you and talked about you all the time. Please tell me I will see him in heaven.

Mission Pastor

To see the reach you have in your ministry is moving!

Former Volunteer

Thank God for Rick Johnson who was the first Chaplain who I was under and trusted me to do chapel services twenty-four years ago.

Youth at ACP

Thank you for showing me the good things I am capable of doing when I worship God and go to church. My goal is to become a good person like you.

Special Guest

I really like how you do your church services. You do a good job of keeping the youth engaged.

Incarcerated Youth

I learned more in this last hour than all the times I went to my old church combined.

Program Administrator

I'm hearing good things from the guys about their Fridays with you.

PCM Volunteer

Good insight! The information you shared makes me better prepared to work with the youth on Monday nights.

Mom of Released Youth

Thanks for bringing my son's confidence to a new level. This was something I have not been able to do.

I received each of these quotes either in person, through a card, through a text message, or in an email.