

SPRING NEWSLETTER

Chaplain Rick Johnson

Serving Incarcerated Youth Since 1985

Getting Back to Normal?

Only a limited number of intakes are allowed each week at Juvenile Hall to accommodate a 14-day quarantined period. Will the Juvenile Court continue to keep the population low or will they decide to bring into custody the hundreds of probationers who are violating their terms of probation? What happens later this year will determine if my ministry can get back to the way it was.

High Desert State Prison

I met Jose in Juvenile Hall around 1996 and he has been writing and calling me from prison for years. He started serving the Lord in the High Desert State Prison about three years ago. Now that he has a tablet in his cell, we are able to email back and forth. He recently got permission from the "big homie" in his building to start a bible study and asked if I could send him a study bible. Twenty men attended his first study. Seventeen had committed murder and three were in the Mexican Mafia. Definitely a rough audience.

Theo Lacy Jail

I got reconnected with Jesse at his brother's funeral three years ago and have visited him a few times after he ended up in jail with a vehicular manslaughter charge. The victim's family wrote him a letter forgiving him for the death that took place. He is the only one out of thirty men in his sector who wants to serve the Lord. Jesse takes communion alone in his cell each night and has read the Bible all the way through since his arrest in November. He is willing to be sentenced to prison and has a good attitude about serving God there. His mom shows her appreciation by giving me homemade tamales!

I am called to disciple individuals who are recovering from addiction or rebuilding their lives. Because I want to be a good steward, I started looking to add new locations to serve at. I contacted the Orange County Jail Ministry about becoming one of their chaplains but was told I would first have to find a church team to volunteer with for three years.



The chaplain who ministers at the Olive Crest group homes is moving out of state so I applied for that part time position but didn't hear anything back. I signed up to volunteer at Salvation Army's Adult Rehabilitation Center, but heard nothing back. I completed the process to volunteer with the Orange County Rescue Mission (see photo) and had a tour with the program director. They already have a great team of people serving there so I am waiting to hear if I will be needed.

Earlier in the year, I caught myself feeling busy again, almost like I had a normal schedule. Since the Lord knows the future, maybe he doesn't want me to serve anywhere else because the chaplaincy is going to be enough to handle. The goal isn't just to make more contacts but to see fruit that comes from discipling new believers one at a time.





Street Light Church

In December, I began leading worship on Facebook Live at the home of Pastor Santos (on the right). In February, he asked if I would teach at each of his church services on Sunday evenings. He needed to take over the Spanish congregation that meets at the same time. The church went through a split over the summer and I want to do what I can to keep it going. I welcomed the extra ministry responsibility since I was looking for more to do and the time commitment fits into my schedule so far.

The church has a home called Restoration House for men and women and Brian (in the middle) was recently paroled there after doing seven years in prison. The picture was taken at the annual Easter service and picnic at Mile Square Park.

Several grocery stores allow Pastor Santos to pick up their donations and he takes food to various motels every week. It is his desire to obtain a warehouse and start a food bank and thrift store. He is in the process of writing grants, finding donors, and applying for funds from the state for organizations working with the homeless.

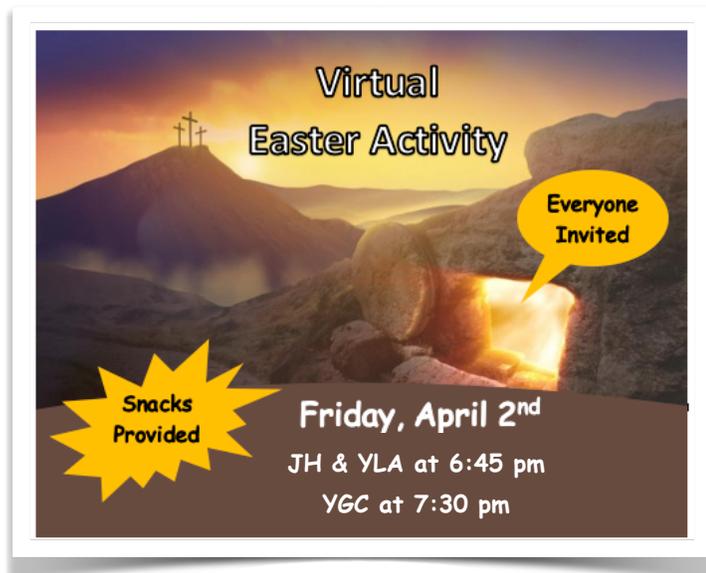
So far this year, I have continued to see certain youth reach out to our ministry for support and help. The highlight of any week is when the youth I talk to on the phone open up and I sense the Holy Spirit leading the conversation. Helping make a difference in the life of one incarcerated youth is what matters even though the way it happens is not the best.

On April 6th I got an email from the director over the Youth Guidance Center and the Youth Leadership Academy. He wants to meet on a conference call to discuss holding in person church services again! I was pleased to hear that in person visiting and church services will begin pretty much at the same time.

Easter Outreach

I began planning my Virtual Easter Outreach in February with the goal of sharing the real meaning of Easter and how to become a Christian to everyone in all three facilities. The Lord gave me the idea to ask two retired probation staff to be in the video and they both agreed. I tried to make sure the staff working on the night of the outreach knew about David and Anna's role and I think that was why so many youth at JH and YLA attended.

The filming took place at seven locations and over twenty hours were spent putting the short presentation together. There has been almost one hundred views on my **You Tube Channel** and one person in the community told me his five year old son started praying the prayer of salvation with me while watching it.



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