

Spring Newsletter

Serving Troubled Youth Since 1981

When to Retire?

For several years I have been asking the Lord to keep me on the mission field full-time until I am 68 or 70 years old. As I was praying about this awhile back, I thought to myself, "Who am I to be telling the Lord how long I am going to serve him?" He has done a great job taking care of me this far so I have nothing to worry about.

Since that day I have been telling the Lord that I will serve him as long as he wants, with whomever he wants, and with whatever income he wants.

A couple months ago I was meeting with a mission's pastor and the topic of finding a replacement came up. Her comment was, "No one can replace Chaplain Rick." The ministry doesn't need someone just like me but the person God wants to place in this position. Whoever that person will be needs to start out as one of our volunteers so let's keep praying for the Lord to send us new ones.



The Annual PCM Volunteer Training hit the target this year and brought those serving at different locations together in one place. Those who couldn't attend watched the training segment later on. The presentation I gave about last year's stats is on my YouTube Channel if you would like to view it. Sharon Aguilera from Revive Covenant did a great job leading worship and the highlight was Pastor Santos from Street Light Church sharing his testimony about when he was in Juvenile Hall.

The training was how our volunteers serve like first responders who administer first aid to those who are injured. What we do with incarcerated youth is what the Good Samaritan did to the man who was robbed on the road to Jericho. Even though we want to do more, many of the youth we serve don't want God to do a deep work (surgery) in their lives. What they really want is immediate help to make them feel better. That is why 41% of the chaplain requests come from the intake units where the youth are upset about their arrest and are looking for hope.

Romans 12:15

"Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn."

The hardest thing to do sometimes is rejoice with a youth who receives a short sentence or is getting released early because many of them are not ready to go back home. Whenever I meet with a youth who is remorseful or in emotional pain, I naturally want to make them feel better. But Paul didn't tell believers to encourage, feel sorry for, or rescue those who are in pain. He tells us to feel what they are feeling.



Easter Week

Rather than scheduling an Easter Outreach this year, I decided to have a movie night and share the movie, "I Can Only Imagine" with the youth in YLA (February 23rd) and YGC (March 13th). Church attendance has been encouraging at both facilities.

During the week of Easter, I focussed on holding a special communion service at the YGC Bible Study on Wednesday and the YLA Church Service on Thursday. A volunteer (Gwen) who served with me said it was one of her most memorable times of taking communion.

Last December I scheduled a team from Northeast of the Well to minister at four Sunday morning church services throughout the year. One of the Sundays was March 31st, not realizing at the time that it was Easter Sunday. They did a great job making Easter Sunday a memorable day (see photo).

The youth look forward to special activities especially when there are snacks and ask when the next one will be.

Testifying at a Parole Hearing

Rene Funes got back in touch with me four years ago because he wanted to get out of prison and needed a mentor in the community. He began to call me once in a while to share how he was preparing himself to speak to the parole board so they would see that he is finally ready to live in the real world.

Rene was one of the only inmates who sent me copies of apology letters written to his mom, his victim, the City of Santa Ana that honestly expressed remorse. He also sent me his relapse prevention plan and told me about all the self-help books he was reading and sharing with other inmates.

I remember praying with Rene over the phone a few days before his parole hearing. At his first hearing, the board commended him for the changes he had made but asked him to give them one more year of good behavior. When Rene returned to the board a year later, they honored their word and recommended parole.

Unfortunately, the governor denied it saying Rene did not have the ability to deal with stress. So, he wrote out another plan on how he would deal with stress within the community. Rene was able to petition the parole board for reconsideration where guests could write letters and speak virtually on his behalf. It was something I had never done before but told Rene I was willing to speak.

On March 18th, I logged onto the parole board hearing in Sacramento at 11:00 am. After a few minutes, I realized that the board had a lot of other business to take care of before they started handling the parole requests. So I drove to Juvenile Hall and logged back into the meeting. At 1:05 pm, my name was called and I turned on the camera to begin my two-minute speech. Two other family members spoke on Rene's behalf and later that day, I got word that after seventeen years in prison, he was getting out!

Rene was paroled to a program in Los Angeles and called me a few days later. He is doing so well and sounded very happy to be given another chance. He has a lot of support and will meet me at Street Light Church when he gets a weekend pass.



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