



*Life is messy, but Jesus gives hope
to all who need to be set free
behind bars of steel
and walls of bitterness.*

December Newsletter 2014

Christmas – the most wonderful time of the year (unless you're in jail!)

How do you celebrate Christmas? Parties, shopping, special treats prepared by loving hands, anticipating the delight of your kids and loved ones over a gift you've gotten them, family time together, seeing friends and loved ones who live far away, Christmas carols, brightly colored decorations, sparkling lights, the list could go on, couldn't it?

But what if none of those were allowed? What if you couldn't give or receive gifts? What if you couldn't see your loved ones? What if nothing could be decorated where you lived? And there were no special treats to look forward to? What if many of the people around you were angry, bitter, and unpredictable, even violent, and there was no way to get away from them?

Sadly, there are some 600 of our Butte County neighbors who find themselves in just such a situation. Their future is often hanging on the uncertain outcome of a legal process they don't understand. Even while longing for the comforting presence of someone they know and love, many are tormented by memories of having betrayed their trust, bringing suffering to those who care most about them. Many know that they will not be spending Christmas with those they love for many years. Panic alternates with despondency and hopelessness. How would you feel if this was your Christmas?

Humanly speaking, there is little hope, but God knew that our sin would put us in this situation, that we would need a Savior to give us hope, to deliver us from ourselves. That's why Jesus came to experience our pain, our weakness, our guilt and our death, so that we could inherit His victory, His strength, His perfect holiness before our Father, and His abundant, eternal life! Jesus became our Emmanuel, our 'God-with-us', to set us free from the prisons that hold us, to transform our character into His image, to reconcile the relationships we have broken, and to work His healing through us in this world of broken people. Imagine the joy in Heaven as the grace of God, provided by the Lamb of God, works its way through us to touch the hopeless, the hurting, the imprisoned, and set them free indeed! Alleluia!



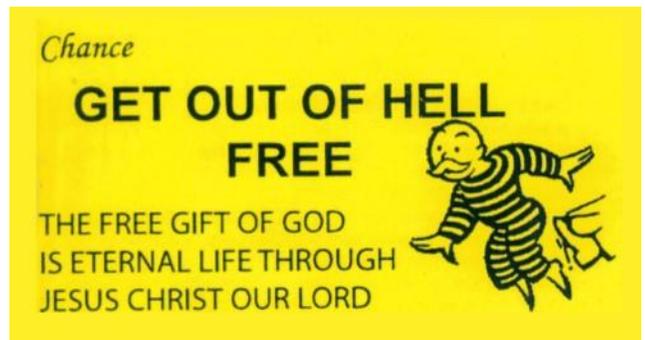
*And His name shall be called,
Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty
God, the Everlasting Father, the
Prince of Peace.*

Christmas Party in Jail!

Thursday, December 11, we celebrated our Butte County Jail Christmas Party! Yes, we know jail's no party, but we were allowed to invite visitors, area pastors and concerned Christians, to come with us as we talked about the Christmas story, sang carols, and distributed gifts to everyone in the jail! One of our members took 614 white paper lunch bags, and had their Sunday school kids color Christmas pictures all over them. Then we stuffed them with candy, a professionally illustrated and printed booklet of testimonies gathered from former Butte County Jail inmates, and even a "Get Out of Hell Free" card,



with instructions on how to find eternal life printed on the back! In the pod I visited, fully 32 of the 40 inmates gathered with me in a huge circle to thank God for Christmas, and to pray for each other and their loved ones. Many voices lifted up prayers and praise to God! Thank You, Jesus!



Mentoring Banquet

Monday, December 22, mentors, mentees, and those who make the Butte County's Community Impact Mentoring relationships possible, all met for our third annual Thanksgiving/Christmas potluck to celebrate the successes God has worked in transforming offenders' lives. Eurrie Moody, a past graduate of the Alternative Custody Supervision program and one of the first mentoring participants, is still meeting weekly with his mentor (me), is pursuing a degree at Butte College in multimedia, and is helping me revamp our ministry website. He sang for us to set the stage for the testimonies that followed. Mentor and mentee alike spoke of the impact of their relationship on their walk with Christ, and the success and satisfaction they experience as a result. Eurrie then closed with "I've been there, that's why I'm here" by Kenny Chesney.



If you've ever wondered if God could use you to change a life, to be an influence for His kingdom in someone who needs help and encouragement, call or email me!

Please remember "the least of these my brothers", our neighbors in jail, and the ministry of ARM, as you plan your year-end gifts. They must be postmarked by Dec. 31 to count for 2014 taxes.

Prayer Requests:

- Praise God for those whom God has called to mentor and disciple inmates, both in jail and released on ankle monitors. Pray that He would raise up many more to carry His Word into the lives of new believers.
- Praise Him for new life in so many, and for God's care and provision in their lives, and ours.

