



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

September ARM Newsletter

An Inmate's Story (or, "Pastor Ian, why do you do what you do?")

Week 1. I first visited M on suicide watch. He was allowed a heavy, quilted canvas blanket, and a mattress - not even clothes. He was desperate for a Bible, so I helped him memorize Jeremiah 29:11. He scratched it into the paint of his cell with his fingernail. I encouraged him to focus on God, to strip away everything else that he had come to rely on. As I spoke and read the Bible to him, I could see the Holy Spirit visibly calm his agitation.

Week 2. M seemed at peace, but was still on suicide watch. I told him that, even though it didn't seem right, God promises that nothing can touch His child without His permission. I asked him to be still before God, to look for what God wanted to accomplish in him through this time and put it into practice. He said he would.

Week 3. M bounded up out of the stairway with a grin to see me in the visiting room. He showed off his jumpsuit (no more blanket) and Bible, and told me his story. M had started talking to the guy in the cell next to him (also on suicide watch). He stood up on his bunk to get as close to the vent as possible (it carried the sound). He reached up and put his hand on the vent as he prayed fervently for his neighbor's needs.

The next day, he was off suicide watch! God had been waiting for him to demonstrate that Christ-character that reaches outside of himself to help another, even in the deprivation of suicide watch. God's purpose had been accomplished; M had learned the lesson of passing God's grace on to others.

The next day, his neighbor hanged himself. When the guards and medical responders arrived, M prayed on his knees for his neighbor's life. When he heard the medic say, "I've got a pulse!" he knew God had answered his prayer! Now, M's prayer was that he could enjoy the fellowship and support of other believers.

Week 4. I visited the pod where M had been moved. His testimony of God's work in his life, answering his prayer to return life to his neighbor, had transformed everyone in the pod. They were eager for God's Word!

Week 5. M was gone. God had delayed his move to state prison long enough to change his life forever, and leave behind a testimony that changed many others. Pray that God would use M's testimony wherever he goes.

Mentoring. I am mentoring an ankle bracelet releasee through Butte County's Community Impact Mentoring program pilot trial. He is a disabled veteran of the Iraq war, and a Christian, but he developed substance abuse issues after coming home injured. Pray for him, and that Christians would fill the mentoring program to provide grace, support, and examples of well-adjusted relationships, not only with other people, but with God as well. Pray for us on the planning committee, too, as we prepare another, larger mentoring training session in February.

Helpers. A volunteer has stepped forward to keep our books, and another has donated an old copy of QuickBooks. I have met with a Christian CPA in Paradise, who has helped me (free of charge!) prepare our 64 page application for tax-exempt status with the IRS. He has looked it over, checking every detail, so that there will be no delays in our 501(c)(3) process. We expect to hear back from the IRS in January.

I am meeting with church leaders in the area to talk about presenting the vision of ARM to their people. The Sunday introduction will be followed by living room Q & A meetings, to discuss how each person's gifting could represent Christ and their congregation to inmates and their families in their own community.

Board of Directors – Allow me to introduce them:

Lou Diaz, from Chico, is Chairman of the board. Lou is the Senior Pastor of Chico Evangelical Free Church, and superintendent-at-large for this area of the Western district of the EFCA.

Sherry Smith, from Richvale, is our Secretary. Sherry is the president of North State Diving, and brings a wealth of practical experience running an office and a business in California.

Virgle Gage, living in the hills above Oroville, is our Treasurer. Virgle has founded several non-profit organizations, and was for years a consultant to non-profits in the San Francisco area.

Roxanne Carlisle, living in Biggs, is our board vice-chair. She has many years experience in grant writing, donor development, teaching and mentoring for educational and religious non-profits.

Praises and Prayer Requests:

- We have sent off our application for federal tax-exempt status. In addition to tax exemptions for our donors, 501(c)(3) status will qualify us for discounts on office hardware and software. Please pray that our application will be approved without delay.
- Please pray that God will raise up prayer warriors and a Prayer Coordinator, someone who would take initiative to get our specific prayer requests out to those who have committed to hold ARM's ministry to inmates and their families up before our Lord.
- Please pray for those in local churches who could host an ARM Q & A introduction meeting, and that God would move people to pray, volunteer, and give.
- I will be working harvest for a local farmer in October. Please pray for safety at work and God's financial provision for Roxanne and me.

I'm excited to see what God is doing, and going to do!
Thank you for your prayers, your help, and your encouragement.
Blessings to you, my friends and fellow Ambassadors!

