



*Shining the light of Jesus' love on the walled-in souls of our communities*

## January 2023 Conference Report

**2022 was the realization of a dream.** We had long anticipated work in the Illinois prison system. We are working via Zoom in Stateville, Joliet, where we provide anger management and addiction recovery classes. Additional pastors and volunteers are needed, and mentoring is available.

Volunteers, we want you to be aware of how important you are to this ministry. You go where we could not afford to send a full-time chaplain; you extend the reach of the ministry in awesome ways. Thank you! In appreciation, we have raised both our hourly support and our mileage support for those who desire it.

**God Continues Gracelinks Growth.** God used COVID to grow an email devotional ministry to inmates, as follows:

2019	2020	2021	2022
2 souls	140 souls	450 souls	660 souls

A security company watches over email into prisons. In WI, their contract allows them to charge 10¢ per email. In December, we spent \$1,395 for email! That's almost 14,000 opportunities to share Law and Gospel in one month!

New growth has resulted from this email ministry in response to comments and suggestions:

- Devotions are now available to families of the inmate, so that they can use them to start a spiritual discussion with a family member.
- We are now producing the third printed edition of these devotions for jails, where email is not available. Currently, 1,000 are being sent to TX; 1,000 to WI; and 500 to MN.
- Inmates write back and ask questions. We need help, both writing original devotions, and to provide careful, scriptural answers to all of their questions.
- Inmates are requesting pastoral visitation. Over 30 of the 660 inmates are in federal prisons, so these requests can come from any state. Currently, we are speaking with pastors in WI, IA, VA, and NH.

**In-person Ministry is Growing.** To better handle the growth God is bringing to our ministry, we plan to call a pastor as Director of Ministry and a layperson as Volunteer Coordinator. Through this initiative, we hope to better guide chaplains and volunteers and to have an efficient database of our work among inmates.

Pastors and congregations, we are happy to provide preachers from Institutional Ministries whenever possible. We offer to preach for a Mission Sunday, when you have a meeting away from home, when you are on vacation or ill, and when you just want a weekend free to help you focus on evangelism that week. We want to support you in every way possible.

Thank you for your loving support for each family, as God called home to himself the souls of Chaplain Ken Wenzel, and former Board members Pastor Jim Olsen and Mr. David Strohschein.