

# Our Generation

"Let this be written for a future generation, that a people not yet created may praise the Lord: the Lord looked down from his sanctuary....to hear the groans of the prisoners." Ps. 102:18

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## Adult Education Series

**"Ministry In and Out of Prison"** will be presented on three January Sundays (10-10:45 a.m.) at Church of the Servant CRC. Members of Church of the Servant and friends from other congregations are welcome to attend. Questions? Contact Pastor Rebecca Jordan-Heys at 616-956-7611.

Sunday, Jan. 9. Pastor-developer Rich Rienstra and volunteer partner-members present information and stories about Celebration Fellowship, an emerging congregation of the Christian Reformed Church in North America located in a Michigan correctional facility.

Sunday, Jan. 16. Christians for Prisoners & Prisoners for Christ committee members highlight this group's advocacy and partnership efforts with individuals and families affected by incarceration.

Sunday, Jan. 23. Clifford Washington, coordination manager of Pine Rest Christian Mental Health Services Reentry Initiative, describes the roles and activities of state and community reentry agencies in assisting returning citizens to adjust to life outside prison.

## News from Celebration Fellowship

On Monday evenings since November 2008 up to 15 people from "outside" churches join pastor-developer Rich Rienstra at Ionia Bellamy Creek Correctional Facility to meet with 30-35 inmates for small group discussions, prayer and a worship service. Most of the volunteer-partners come on a monthly basis from several Christian Reformed churches: Ada, Baldwin Street, Brookside, Church of the Servant, Covenant, Immanuel (Kalamazoo), Keystone, LaGrave, Lakeside, Plymouth Heights, Providence, River Terrace (E. Lansing), Seymour, Sherman Street and Step of Faith, Third (Zeeland) as well as Eastminster Pres. (Lansing) and Bethany Reformed (Kalamazoo.)

Each evening begins with circle groups for study and prayer for one hour, and a large group worship service during the second hour. Occasionally, the routine is bit different - as when Mark Muller directed a mini-drama of the Christmas story last December or when Mr. Richard DeVos Sr. came in October to speak about "Ten Powerful Phrases for Positive People."

An inside leadership team meets weekly at Ionia Bellamy Creek Correctional Facility with Pastor Rich to pray, study and reflect together about the day-to-day business of being a celebrating fellowship of Christ-followers.

An outside steering team meets monthly to make long-range plans and handle some of the governance and support issues related to the prison congregation. Members of that team are Mark Muller, Char Dykema, Mike Hoogetboom, Adria Libolt, Rich Rienstra, Paul Strong, Ron Stuursma, Jim Tuinstra, Glen Van Andel, and Henry Zwaanstra. Ben Becksvort and Al Mulder from the CRCNA denominational offices serve as ex-officio advisors.

For more information about Celebration Fellowship, which is supported by Christian Reformed Church Home Missions, as well as several classes and congregations, contact Pastor Rich Rienstra at [richrienstra@hotmail.com](mailto:richrienstra@hotmail.com) or go to: [http://www.mlive.com/living/grand-rapids/index.ssf/2008/12/group\\_starts\\_the\\_first\\_church.html](http://www.mlive.com/living/grand-rapids/index.ssf/2008/12/group_starts_the_first_church.html)



Returning citizens – recently released from Bellamy Creek Correctional Facility – gather regularly to encourage one another and to develop their worship leadership skills and gifts. With assistance from consultants and workshop leaders, the group is being formed into a celebrating fellowship that creates and practices worship service components to be shared with Celebration Fellowship and in worship services at outside partner churches. Jimmy Erickson, who has been working at Butterball Farms for nearly two years and has been discharged from parole, serves as the coordinator.

*The CONTACT program is made possible through a worship renewal grant from the Calvin Institute for Christian Worship - Grand Rapids, MI with funds provided by Lilly Endowment Inc.*

## Celebrating Our Need to Adore Christ Together



Calling Offenders to Network Together for Adoration, Confession and Thanksgiving

**The CONTACT group invites family and friends to join them on January 9, 2011, at 6 p.m. at Church of the Servant, 3835 Burton St. for worship and fellowship. They will share messages, through songs and testimonies, about their hope in Christ, and host a reception in the café following the service.**

*Our Generation* is the newsletter of Christians for Prisoners & Prisoners for Christ (CFP&PFC), a partnership among disciples of Jesus Christ on both sides of prison walls, conceived by Troy Rienstra in 2003 and adopted as an outreach ministry of Church of the Servant Christian Reformed Church in 2006. For more of the history and purpose of the ministry, go to <http://www.churchoftheservantcrc.org/ministries/christians-for-prisoners-prisoners-for-christ> or "Reaching Out" at [www.churchoftheservantcrc.org](http://www.churchoftheservantcrc.org)

To support the work of Christians for Prisoners & Prisoners for Christ (CFP&PFC) and the Celebration Fellowship Prison Congregation, you are invited to send your tax-deductible contribution designating "CFP&PFC" or "Celebration Fellowship" on the memo line of the check to:

Church of the Servant Christian Reformed Church  
3835 Burton Street SE,  
Grand Rapids MI 49546



A message from Troy Rienstra to all who are involved in, pray for and support CFP&PFC,

The formation of CFP&PFC was - and is - our response to Christ's mandate to "go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." (Matt. 28:19-20) Recorded in the Acts of the Apostles we see the desire, presence and power of Christ's Kingdom being manifest through the transformed lives of his disciples. Their obedience to the Great Commission resulted in a changed culture.

We can expect the Spirit of God to transform lives and change the culture within our nation's prisons once a **deep love for Christ** is rooted and grounded in the hearts of imprisoned believers.

This year we want to explore the subject of **discipleship within prison**, developing a plan of action and casting the vision before the men and women who maintain the bridge between free and prison churches.

At this time each year, I set myself to see **where the Spirit of God is leading** CFP&PFC. This year, with the arrival of 1.1.11 we are approaching a time and season that may provide us with significant symbolic insight.

As I contemplate this rare succession of 'ones' which will appear on our calendar only once every one-hundred years, I find myself being reminded of Jesus, the One and only begotten (first-born) son of God, who prayed that we may "be one" (Jn 17:21); of the first century believers who "were in one heart and mind" (Acts 4:32); and, of Paul, who wrote from a prison cell, "To all the saints in Jesus Christ at Philippi - stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel." (Php 1:1a, 27b.)

So that we can gain our bearings as we move ahead toward achieving our original goal, come with me to revisit the past couple of years.

In the **September 2005 "Banner" magazine** article, "The Church Behind Bars," I shared my observations of steps that needed to be taken for the prison church to reach its greatest potential. "There are four areas that need to be addressed: church adoptions, discipleship, missions and social programs."

2008: On Sept. 15 the **Lord's Supper was celebrated** for the first time in 10 years at Chippewa Correctional Facility thanks to a donation of communion elements by Michigan Prison Fellowship. The next day I was transferred from Chippewa to Newberry Correctional Facility (NCF) in Newberry, MI. In November 2008, Celebration Fellowship prison congregation began services at Ionia Bellamy Creek facility and on Dec. 20, the Grand Rapids Press featured an article about the congregation, called "Bibles Behind Bars."

2009: I was invited to serve the body of Christ at NCF as a **member of the Deacon Board**, and in March served on the **inside leadership team for Keryx #2**, which Eddie R. attended as a candidate. On July 8 I met Patricia Caruso, Director of the Michigan Dept. of Corrections, during her visit to NCF, and thanked her for authorizing the prison congregation in Ionia.

2010: I was invited to serve as guest speaker at the NCF African-American History month celebration on Feb. 19. Fellow prisoner Jody G. and I **created D.R.E.A.M.** (Developing Relevant Entrepreneurs by Accountability and Mentorship) and requested approval from the M.D.O.C. to introduce the concept to the prison population. Then on April 29, I was transferred to the R.A. Handlon Correctional Facility (MTU) in Ionia. In September I completed the National Center for Construction Education (NCCER) core curriculum and continue to receive **construction trades training** at Michigan Training Unit. The class builds cabinets for Habitat for Humanity as part of a "Prison Build" project. This fall I've enjoyed weekly visits with my parents as well as visits with Rev. Paul Kortenhoven, former missionary in Sierra Leone, and two professors from Calvin Theological Seminary: David Rylaarsdam and Ron Nydam. On November 1, I was **interviewed by a representative of the Parole Board** and am waiting to hear where the Lord will send me next to work in His Kingdom.

I pray that God is leading us to a place where we became one in heart and mind, standing firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel, and where we received the Greatest Commission of all, which is to "go and make disciples."

Imagine the day when prisoners receive the Holy Spirit, devote themselves daily to the apostles' teaching, to fellowship, the breaking of bread and to prayer. Scripture tells us that when a group of people are one in heart and in mind "nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do." (Gen. 11:6)

With gratitude for your support and prayers and with a strong desire to meet each one of you in person in the near future, I am your brother in Christ.

*Who Am I?*

*Who am I among those who have gone before,  
who endured the trial of faith, dawning heaven's door? –  
a grain of the shore, insignificant to mine eye;  
an instrument of order to thine.  
A glimmer adrift in the vastness of night in my own sight;  
an illuminator of the world as thy Son has given light.*

*Who am I, weak and broken, poor and needy? –  
My strength, my repairer of despair,  
thou who art rich art my sufficiency.  
Thy instrument forged in the fire of affliction, adorned with fine  
treasure, brazen, bold in thy hand, Almighty One.  
A gleam brought forth from the depth of thy heart, twice born of  
whom which thou art well pleased: thy beloved son.*

*Who am I whom thou hast set with a purpose which no man can  
thwart, not even I? A strong box where thou hast hid thy affection!  
I am not, yet I possess, the answer to mankind's inquiry.*

*Who am I? I am thine, wholly. Holy, I am thine.  
Why must I then ask? Because I know not? No, no, I think not.  
Why then the match of solitaire? Alas! Alas, the appointed time has  
come. The masquerade has run.  
I must be what I am. Wholly thine, Holy thine.*

by Troy Rienstra (10/16/10)

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On October 11, Patricia Caruso, director of Michigan's Department of Corrections, spoke at Church of the Servant for the quarterly meeting of supporters of CFP&PFC and Celebration Fellowship.

For an article about her presentation, which highlighted Michigan's "new culture" of safer communities and reentry success through collaboration with faith-based and community organizations, go to <http://www.crcna.org/news.cfm?newsid=2221&section=1>

(On Dec. 4, 2010, Patricia Caruso was honored by the Association of State Correctional Administrators as the outstanding Director for Corrections in 2010. On January 1, 2011 she will retire and newly elected governor Rick Snyder will hopefully appoint a replacement who will keep moving forward in the positive and successful direction set by Director Caruso. )