



The Insider

Fall 2022

A quarterly publication from The Saints Prison Ministry

Inside This Issue

Saints Give an Award

Find out who received the Saints Prison Ministry's Corrections Ally of the Year

- page 2

From the Inside Out

Artwork and letters from men and women behind bars.

- page 3

SE Lady Saints travel...a lot!

- page 4

Inside the Mind of Gibby

- page 5

God on Display

By Jennie Duke, SE Lady Saints Missionary-Athlete

On Saturday, August 13th, the SE Lady Saints traveled to Whitworth Women's Facility, and God was on full display right from the start.

Right after hopping on the bus at 6am, I learned that I was to share my testimony... wait, what?!?! My work week had been so hectic that I'd missed that text! The coach knew it wouldn't be a problem, but I arrived that morning less prepared than usual - and that put me in a bit of a panic. Of course, in God's perfect plan, He knew I was going to have to rely solely on HIM to speak for me! I quickly texted my team of beloved prayer warriors, and we all went to the Lord on the 2-hour bus ride. While I've shared my testimony on visits several times before, I have always relied on notes when speaking in front of a crowd. ALWAYS! The notes are important because my testimony and what brought me to Jesus was extremely painful and difficult to relive.

Growing up poor, in Section 8 housing and on food stamps had made me fiercely self-reliant. That had served me pretty well into adulthood - or so I thought. But after losing our 5-year-old daughter, Hunter, to brain cancer...followed by a failing marriage...and grossly failing our young son as parents, I came to the end of myself, and it brought me to my knees. I realized that I could NOT save myself, or my family, on my own. And that brought me, broken and wrecked, to the foot of the cross and ultimately into a personal relationship with Him.

As the morning wore on, I surprisingly felt no butterflies despite having to share my testimony without any notes. It was just fun, fellowship & kickball with a group of women who were glad we made the trip. When the time came to take the microphone, a sense of immense peace washed over me, and the words came so naturally and freely I felt like I was talking to folks I've known my whole life! When I got to the death of our sweet daughter, in His power I didn't fall apart, and I was able to share EXACTLY what I know He wanted me to share! In that moment, God shared something with me. He showed me the biggest difference between the old me & the new me... something I

hadn't fully recognized before. I used to rely solely on the power of me - the self-reliant woman who could face anything. But today I stood in HIS power, vulnerable and yet more calm than ever before, because I trusted in Him!

God is so sweet how He works all things together for the good of those who love Him. He took the worst thing that's ever happened to my husband and I - something I'm certain Satan would have loved to use to destroy us - and that is the very thing that brought both of us to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ!

And He didn't stop there, because I now have the privilege and joy of sharing my story, and a little piece of Hunter, with all who will listen, to help share the love, comfort, and peace that only Jesus Christ can offer. At Whitworth that day, we witnessed 13 women make a profession of faith in Christ! What an amazing day, and even more so, what an amazing day it will be to those 13 beautiful women when they stand before Jesus!

Missions Opportunities

We are all familiar with the term short-term missions trip, and many of our churches are currently active in such around the world. The Saints Prison Ministry has embraced the concept of these short-term trips for long-term impact and is actively seeking churches around the country with whom to partner.

Over the past few years, SPM has partnered with four different churches to reach inmates with the Gospel in areas that our current schedule cannot accommodate.

Right now, we are specifically looking for churches with basketball players who love Jesus Christ to join us in reaching the lost in multiple areas of the country.

If your church would like to join us in 2022 - 2023 using athletics to reach this often unreached people group - contact Frank Zeidler, Executive Director, at fzeidler@saintsprisonministry.org to get the ball bouncing!

The Inside Story

The Saints Prison Ministry occasionally gets requests to work with another organization on a specific project, or even consider merging the organizations together. After a common faith in Jesus Christ and his atoning work at Calvary, the next thing I look for is synergy between the organizations: the idea that like-minded forces, working together as equals, can be greater than the impact of each independently.

Brother Bob's Outreach is based in Wisconsin, and they check all the boxes of my "synergy scorecard." The relationship started simply enough back in 2016 when we were planning our first-ever trip to Wisconsin. One of the prisons we scheduled mentioned a ministry that operated locally using a similar model. A few phone calls later a relationship was begun and, in the fall of 2019, Bruce Buri, BBO's Director of Sports Ministry, joined our crusade to Alabama. He's been a fixture ever since, traveling on five more crusades since then and bringing a few of BBO's missionary-athletes with him on some.

In early August, a few MAs from our Illinois softball team were asked to help fill out the roster for a two-team Brother Bob's softball event. It would have been tempting to treat this trip as though we were just helping out - along

for the ride. We could have just focused on softball, ensuring that each team had enough players. But since this ministry also believes this is about more than just softball, we knew that we still needed to engage with the guys we saw and to be witnesses for Christ.

We had a fantastic day at Racine CI, ministering side-by-side with the Brother Bob's Outreach softball team. Since there were two BBO teams, we were able to play multiple games at the same time. We won all four games and had a great experience interacting with the men in the prison yard. And since it was the Illinois team in Wisconsin, Gibby received his fair share of heckling for being a lifetime Cubs and Bears fan!

This was as seamless an experience as Bruce traveling to Alabama to join a group of men he had never met before. In both cases, the newcomers fit like a hand in a glove... and there is an extremely easy explanation for why. Because in each case, all those involved were so busy looking up for God's strength and looking around for someone on whom to reflect the love of Christ, that there was no room for being uncomfortable or awkward.

Synergy? It's much easier when we're all focused Him!

Saints Give an Award

In late August, Executive Director Frank Zeidler and Director of Team Operations Jimmy Cochran traveled to Tallahassee, FL to present an incredibly special SPM award, an award not given on a regular basis. Based on her efforts to make the Saints Prison Ministry 2021 softball season possible, Ms. Jordan Moyer, FDC Statewide Volunteer Coordinator was awarded the Saints Prison Ministry's Corrections Ally of the Year. While the rest of the country's corrections departments were closed to our ministry, Ms. Moyer went "above and beyond" to ensure that each of our 6 crusade teams was able to minister in Florida during the 2021 calendar year. Her efforts allowed us to minister to thousands of men who might not otherwise have been exposed to the Gospel last year, as well as serving to further the relationship between the Saints Prison Ministry and the Florida Department of Corrections (FDC). A well-deserved award for outstanding service during a challenging time!



A Day to Remember

The Saints Prison Ministry 2022 NE Golf Classic at Merchantville Country Club was a day to remember! The weather was the highlight of the day, with many people commenting that it could not have been any better if it was custom ordered! But there was some good golf played, excellent food consumed, and tremendous fellowship enjoyed by all!

The ministry is grateful to Steve Schoch, Tournament Director and his team - Rob Fogel and Warren Miller, our volunteers for the day and the Merchantville Country Club, our hosts for the fifth year running, for a spectacular event. The tournament not only raised almost \$10,000 for the work of the ministry, but God was glorified throughout the day.



FROM THE INSIDE OUT

Correspondence from behind the walls

Thank you, thank you, thank you... I can't say it enough, you have and you continue to lift my spirits every year with your on "time" birthday wishes! I don't know how you do it, but every year I receive my wishes on the day or the day before it being the weekend! Even with family somewhat being around you guys have excelled them all... God is good... All the Time! I just wanted to say thank you and on my 66th birthday you have made me very appreciative! I've kept them all and look at the stack I've received and I say Thank You!!

- Edward M., Lakeland CI, MI

I am writing to you these few lines just to say thanks for that beautiful card. I feel good when the mailmen call me for mail because this doesn't happen often. Because of the time I have spent behind bars, let me tell you that my new place is like paradise. It has big trees and gardens. This new place is so different than the other places I have been. I feel now as if I am home, even though this is still prison. This and your letter makes me feel good. You make a difference. Thank you and God bless.

- Amodeo C., CMC West, CA

First and foremost I would like to thank you for all the support you have given me through out all these years of incarceration, your kindness will never go forgotten in my heart and soul. I really do appreciate your concern, thoughts and blessings every year. I am a freeman now, on August 22, 2022 or earlier I will be released. Thank you for all your messages and kindness, I love you guys.

- Elliot L., Woodbourne CF, NY

A Friend

by Robert H., inmate

What is a friend, well let me tell you
It's someone who stands beside you, no matter what you do.

Through thick or thin, they're by your side,
No matter the situation, they don't run and hide.

And when you're happy, they're happy too,
And they're always on your mind, helping you get through.

And they cheer you up, if your feeling sad,
And they're always patient with you, they don't get mad.

And through the good times, they share those too,
Making you smile, when you're feeling blue.

Life could be a challenge, the things that come your way,
But a friend always seems to know what to do or say.

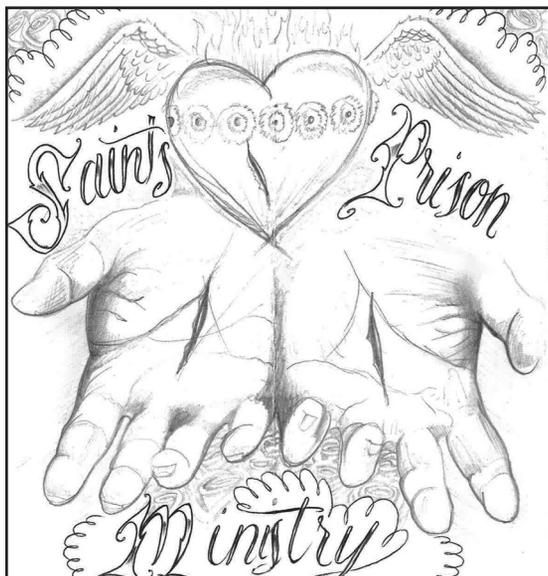
After only a few words, they can tell your mood,
And brighten your day, they make you a happy dude.

And you do the same for them, that's what friends are for,
Getting to know you, right to your core.

So if you want to be friends, just let me now,
Starting today, let our friendship grow.



by Robert H.



by Omar B.

SE Lady Saints travel...a lot!

The SE Lady Saints are probably the most interesting team God uses in this ministry. All our Missionary-Athletes are committed, but this is a unique group of women for this reason: many of them live over 100 miles apart! Yet they come together faithfully every month to be used by God in women's prisons all over Georgia. This is the summary of their last visit of 2022, as told by Ashley Couey, one of the team's coaches.

September 10th was our last prison visit for the 2022 season. We visited Emanuel Women's Facility in Swainsboro, GA, about 80 miles northwest of Savannah.

To make that trip, the ladies who live in North GA got up around 3 AM to begin the trip to meet the South Georgia ladies near the prison by 8 a.m.! Once inside the prison, we were met with lots of smiles and friendly faces. As we walked outside to the field, we passed the visiting room, and not surprisingly, it was empty that early in the day. The field was still very wet from the overnight rain, as several ladies from the prison set out benches and lined the fields in preparation for our kickball games.

The games were spirited, and everyone enjoyed a few laughs and many smiles...and we won both games! Stacy

shared her personal testimony and then Terry shared the Gospel with the inmates. She spoke of Hosea and Gomer, and how God pursues us when we are not lovable or faithful to Him. She also shared the miracle story of her husband's blockage; and how since then, the both of them are even more alert not to miss any opportunities to share Jesus with anyone. Through the power of the Holy Spirit using Stacy and Terry, eleven women gave their lives to Christ that Saturday!

Afterwards, we still had some time to visit with the inmates for a little bit. I talked to several women that day. One in particular, Sarah, was at Whitworth Women's Facility when we visited last year and was extremely excited that Stacy and I remembered her. She told us how she really struggled to forgive herself for the car accident she caused that killed two people. She talked about how much she wants for the families of her victims to forgive her. She absolutely takes ownership for the devastation she caused. We could only offer her the comfort that knowing Jesus brings, and she could certainly use the prayers of the faithful to help her through this struggle.

Before we left, in the main entryway to the prison, Stacy took a moment to pray for the staff. They have a very difficult responsibility and are badly understaffed, making every day that much more challenging.

From a Father

My son spent six years in Danville CC and played softball with your ministry team several of those years. I don't know if all your folks know how much the inmates look forward to those visits. I know it gave my son and others in the prison something positive and uplifting to talk about for weeks and weeks as soon as they found out the schedule. Your presence for one day gave them a mental escape from the day-to-day routine, a glimpse of the outside world, an opportunity to interact with someone other than the staff, an opportunity to see that someone outside remembered and cared. Nick has been out for over 2 years now and is doing great. Your efforts certainly played at least a small role in that. Thank you for your time and efforts!

- Dave E., father of a since-released Illinois prisoner

From a Sister

My brother is incarcerated at Sussex CI in Georgetown, DE. He asked me to pass this message along to you:

I'd like to thank all eleven guys for coming to Sussex CI last weekend (August 6) and for talking to and playing softball with us - it was a great day! I had in depth conversations with Wes, Butch, and Tim and I truly enjoyed meeting them. Also, Zach, Mark, and the others on whose names I am blanking... sorry! All the guys were awesome and just the fact that they took time away from their families, let alone come to a prison for the day, shows they mean what they say. Your testimonies were inspiring and really hit home for me. I've been part of playing in these Saints games since 2012-2013 here at SCI, but this year really meant a lot to me in so many ways. Thank you all and keep up the great work that you do. I wish your families all the best. - Richie R., Sussex CI, Delaware

P.S. Thank you for taking the time to see my brother. It warms my heart for other people to see the value that he has for society. Again, thank you and God bless.

- Richie's sister, Wendy S.

Inside the Mind of Gibby

35 Years and Counting!

By Tom Gibson, IL Saints Softball Coach

We spent 2022 celebrating 35 years of prison ministry and are almost ready for year 36...but not yet! Our squadron of crack researchers at the Mind of Gibby compiled a list of things to look back on from this past year before we flip the calendar to 2023. Please join us as we celebrate our 35th anniversary one last time!

We added the West Virginia Team and at the Same Time Finally Solved the Puzzle of Making Regular Visits to Ohio!

I am a firm believer that nothing happens by chance, but after 35 years, you would think that we would have at least accidentally started a team in Ohio by now! Ohio has been an incredibly open mission field for our ministry for decades, but it isn't always easy to get there. Fortunately, we have a team in West Virginia now, and they are close enough that they can visit several of the Ohio prisons that the rest of us can't get to on a regular basis. They have done a fantastic job in their rookie season, and it is hard to make fun of them. Most of them are Cincinnati Reds fans, though... that's comedy gold on its own!

We Still Didn't Recruit Tim Tebow

I have mentioned this in a previous article, but I still have people walk up to me and remind me, "You guys need to get Tim Tebow to go with you to prison!" I usually roll my eyes and make it a point to forever avoid the person who suggested this, but for crying out loud, they're not wrong.

Tebow used to have a legit excuse for not joining our

ministry; he was an NFL quarterback. After that, he was still too busy for us because he was playing minor league baseball. At this point, all he is probably doing every day is sitting on the couch and eating bags of chips. I'm also fairly sure he reads all of our stuff, so he clearly knows how to get a hold of us. The ball's in your court, Tebow!

The Next Generation Showed Up

This was a fun year for several families in our ministry. The Smiths, DiBenedettos, Cochrans, Browns, and yes, even the Gibsons enjoyed father-son time on the mission field. There is something about being on a field with your kid and seeing them share a moment on the field with you and even more special to see them want to serve the Lord. The best part is our teams are now stacked in the event that we play Mario Kart, Minecraft, or Fortnite instead of actual sports!

Dave Cogliano ran a Crusade... and we lived to tell about it!

When our initial instructions included "devotions start at 1600 hours", we knew we were in trouble...

"The Mind of Gibby" hasn't been Canceled Yet

I know, right? I'm as shocked as anyone. Believe me, after years of insulting teammates, complaining about broken buses, and missing publishing deadlines, I thought that I should have been canned a long time ago, but here we are!

Well, here is to a great 2022 season and an even more exciting 2023! Of course, the excitement level will vary a little depending on whether or not we finally kidnap Tim Tebow!

Board of Trustees 2022-2023

At the Saints Prison Ministry Annual Corporate Meeting, the following individuals are continuing to serve or were elected to the Board of Trustees for 2023 fiscal year. Please join with us in thanking God for bringing us men and women of such godly character, as well as praying for His wisdom to be part of every discussion and decision in the coming year.

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*A "Relative" Perspective
See page 4...*

Amazon Smile

The Saints Prison Ministry just deposited another quarterly check from Amazon! This donation was for \$1,184, representing our faithful supporters taking the extra minute to type smile.amazon.com before signing into their account. Imagine the potential impact when ALL our Saints family get involved!



Amazon has us listed as Saints Prison Ministries Inc. and you must only find it once to link it to your account. Take the extra step and the only thing about the shopping experience is that changes is Saints Prison Ministry gets some of Amazon's money!

Pen Pals Needed

You can fill a volunteer need right from the comfort of your home!

Right now we have more than 100 men and women on our waiting list - many of whom write to us just to remind us to keep them on the list! Please do not make them wait any longer!

For more information, including the Pen Pal guidelines and expectations, please contact the Saints office at 609-845-3197 or office@saintsprisonministry.org

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