



TITUS HOUSE MINISTRIES

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August 2014 Newsletter

Dear Friends: This letter is designed to let those of you in prison and those of you supporting Titus House become aware of some of the recent developments in how people are treated when arrested. A week ago I attended the Sex Offender Management Board in Santa Fe. My main interest there was the fact that the State Supreme Court had recently made a determination regarding on-line porn. On-line porn is now competing with cell phones for access to pornography for just about anyone. My concern is that while we can't seem to catch those who produce the stuff, we are still doing everything we can to apprehend those who access it, taking them to long drawn out trials and long sentences. The Supreme Court was wise enough to group pictures together instead of demanding a sentence for each of thousands of pictures a person would be able to collect. Even so one of our people has been sentenced to 30 years for a first offence of camera-based pornography. He is now appealing that sentence.

On July 24th I went to Santa Fe again to sit most of the day with the Courts, Corrections and Justice Committee. Incidentally, these meetings are all open to the public. If you go the NM Legislature and click on committees, you will learn what is going on. I urge you to go if you can. This committee is committed to (over the next two or three years) making important changes in our prison system. We heard from prison and jail directors yesterday at length. I learned that our total state inmate population is about 6800 but our total jail population is over 8000. There are many reasons people are in jail – awaiting sentencing, going through pre-trial evaluation, some even declared not competent to stand trial. Much discussion was heard about mental health issues. It is wrong, said one, to make the county jail a mental health hospital. We have no federal prisons in our state but many in jail are waiting to be transported to federal prisons in other states. In the US we have five times as many incarcerated people as any other country. Larry tells me that is what US citizens want, namely to arrest the “bad guys” and put them away so the rest of us can enjoy life, free of crime, at least in our neighborhood. Larry is educating me over the phone, on almost a daily basis and I greatly appreciate it. The challenge now is, what to do about the information we have. A good example, related to what Titus House does, is the matter of just what unacceptable sexual offenses are. From my experience in the Philippines, many families live closely together, sleeping, dressing, using the toilet, etc. Many families have one bed, live in one room, shower outside in a see-through structure made of palm branches. US type sex offender laws are being broken on a regular basis. They do however have strict standards on marriage and behavior of couples. But we are the ones who have written tough sex offense laws which include nudity (even for family members) and public urination, such other rules as “improper hugging”. Then there is my favorite complaint: online porn.

As result of America's sex offender rules, we now have thousands of convicted sex offenders in this country. Churches and the media have learned to hate them all, quickly publishing the most egregious on the front page of the paper, even if just accused. Don't get me wrong – I hate the crime of raping a 5-year-old as much as anyone but I also hate the insinuation that every sex offender has done just that.

My purpose in this long discourse is to present the magnitude of our problem, not only in regard to our population of sex offenders (there are hundreds in NM prisons and thousands in larger states), but in

regard to family members, wives, mothers and others concerned about long sentences for those they love and miss. With apparently little thought for families, they are often moved to prisons hundreds of miles from home where wives and children can no longer travel to visit. Then rules are added so that when these people are released they can have no contact with children under 18. How many men do we imagine have accessed online porn and not been convicted, can still live with wife and children? No, I have not solved any thing, but have let you folks realize the vast magnitude of the problem. From a Christian point of view, which we maintain at Titus House, God has a plan for all those caught up in this vast web. Daily we receive phone calls and letters outlining great pain and discouragement. The major need I see is someone to go alongside them assuring that God cares about what is going on, that He loves them without question, that He forgives those who ask Him. I love hearing about people coming into prisons presenting God's message, and also small spontaneous Bible study and prayer groups. What we do is send introductory mentoring sheets, encouraging them to tell their story, then we send Four Spiritual Laws to those who seem unclear regarding religious beliefs. I received a letter this morning with the first sheet enclosed. He stated he was a Muslim and wondered if we would drop him because of it. Of course we won't!

BLESSINGS FROM BILL: One of the causes of behavior difficulties is a poor self-image. How can we have a good self-image if all our life has been chaos, loss, and trouble? Gangs promised better, but were only more of the same. God is the only "self," the only "life." Living in Christ we have the self-image of God. The old self is crucified, a new self is resurrected, good and true and whole.

CIRCLE OF CONCERN: August 3rd, Foothills Church, Tramway and Candelaria NE – 6PM to 7:30. Be there! Larry has kindly agreed to share from his three workshops at the RSOL national convention in Dallas. He has some startling statistics on prisons from recent years. He will also be returning from Philadelphia and Minnesota this week! We are collecting simple household items for two or our La Pasada people who have just moved into apartments and who are studying at CNM. Let's encourage them – the same stuff you use daily to prepare food. Canned good and other items would be welcome also.

DON – has had to repair his red pickup lately to the tune of about \$200 and my 5-year-old Yaris is facing getting new brakes, tires etc. Your donations are more than welcome to keep this vital ministry going. Don has spent time with the two students mentioned above. The pickup has transported household furniture for them. Now we need the kitchen stuff. Thanks also to Don's music groups, people like to donate clothing. We can always take good clothing with us on Tuesday evenings to La Pasada. They are grateful.

CHRISTOPHER – Don's youngest son has become my book illustrator, a member of our La Pasada team and our favorite "yard man." He will soon be working fulltime but right now we are taking advantage of him as much as possible. He joined the First Baptist Church of Tijeras and is quite the newest excitement at the church. We love you Chris!

Our love, Alice for us all