



Prison Alliance

Spring 2021 Newsletter

A Divine "Shove"

CLI Begins Outreach in the Philippines

The mission and vision of CLI's ministry is simple: making disciples worldwide. While that process may not look the same in every church, state or country, the truth is that the gospel is the same no matter where it is preached. Taking that message to the jails and prisons of the entire world has always been the goal of our alliance, but it has taken a global pandemic to launch this initiative in a more aggressive way. It's as if God wanted us to realize that if we were going to reach the world with the gospel it wasn't going to be in our own power but in His. As we obediently followed His leading, God opened doors into Mexico, first, and then the Philippines.

Launching CLI's outreach in the Philippines has been nothing short of a divine "shove" from behind to move...and quickly. Through a partnership with a missions agency, contact was made with a local Filipino pastor named Jonnel Suyat. You see, inside of Pastor Jonnel's church was a former inmate who had been burdened about reaching the men and women in the jails around them. He had been inside. He knew the despondency and hopelessness that one feels behind bars. This burden had been placed on him by God and was now being shared by many in the church. They longed to begin but needed the right tools and program in order to be effective. That's when God yoked our ministries together.

To begin, the ministry program of CLI's Bible studies was presented to the warden of the local jail nearby. The warden enthusiastically welcomed the program, even urging them to begin that day. Excitement was building, and it was evident that God was opening doors that once were closed, especially in the midst of a global crisis. The very next week, Pastor Jonnel and a team of students from his church's Bible institute arrived at that jail and presented the gospel at each



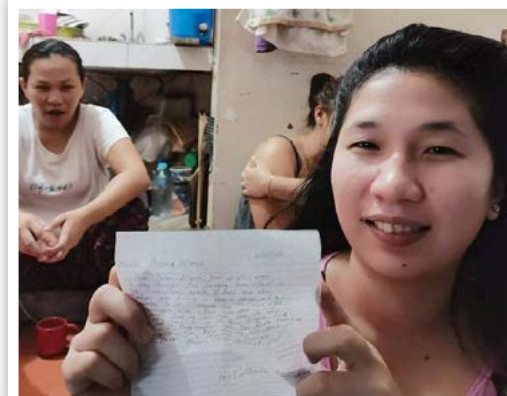
Pastor Jonnel has recruited 18 leaders to enter over 30 jails in the Philippines since November.

cell. They wrote down the names of each inmate who made a profession of faith in Christ in that first meeting. 156 men accepted Jesus as their Savior that day!

This dedicated group of Filipino Christians saw what God did that day and wondered if it would work in other jails as well. Before they knew it, they were holding services and teaching the CLI Bible study lessons in 12 jails. Nearly 700 men and women in these jails had come to know Jesus and were now being disciplined. Lives were being changed by the power of God's word.

Catherine, a young lady in the women's jail, accepted Christ on the first visit from the CLI Team. As she began to grow in her new-found faith, she wrote:

"Dear CLI Prison Alliance, first of all I want to thank you for bringing Jesus Christ into our lives, hearts, spirits and souls. Thank you for finding us here in prison and giving us courage. I have learned how to read the Bible and appreciate what I have. I now know that God loves us so much that he gave His only Son to us."



A young lady accepted Christ in jail and has since joined the ministry.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE >

CONTINUED FROM FIRST PAGE

A Divine “Shove”

Catherine has since been released from jail and has joined the prison ministry team to continue the work of discipling other inmates.

Ramon was an addict and by his own admission had many different vices that landed him in jail. Awaiting his trial, he heard the good news of the gospel and repented to be saved. The next week, when the ministry team arrived to teach the discipleship lesson, Ramon presented them with letters he had written for his family members. He wanted to make sure he had the message of salvation clearly written so that when they visited him, he could show them how they, too, could know the saving power of Jesus.

Louie had committed murder. He wrote to our Filipino team:

“I realize that I committed a major crime. I am asking forgiveness for my sins. Please pray that the family of my victim will also forgive me. I hope that the Lord will direct my path and change my life.”

As word spread of the work God was doing in those local jails, other pastors from nearby provinces desired to see how they could reach into their jails as well. An alliance within the Philippines was beginning to form. Pastor Jonnel hosted a meeting for all interested pastors to meet with him for a one-day conference where he could teach them the ministry and what it would take to begin reaching the jails and prisons in their cities.

Today, CLI-Philippines is active in 30 jails and partners with 18 pastors and preachers. Over 1,191 Filipino inmates have made a decision for Christ since God launched the ministry in November 2020. What God has shown us is that He is not limited by borders or shutdowns. Like the four men who lowered their friend down to Jesus through the roof of a house (Mark 2:1-12), God has led us down unexpected paths so that His message may be heard.

Please consider how God might be leading you to partner with us in reaching the world with the gospel through prison ministry. ■

FOUNDER’S NOTE

Truth



Kathleen Skaar, Founder

Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. John 17:17-18

God made us for a joyful and fulfilling relationship with Him, and it’s miraculously unfolding daily. But how do we recognize God and His presence in our lives? It’s easier than you might think. Everything we need to know about God and serving Him is in the Bible.

In speaking with the Father, Jesus says clearly, “Your word is truth.” We are made holy, or set apart for God, by the truth of His word. It tells us about God, His creation, our redemption and what is yet to come. Knowing the truth helps us grow in our relationship with God.

Deborah writes from a Florida jail, *“Everything I knew and loved (husband, daughter, home and career) were gone overnight. I was crushed, I cried—I was sick—I did not want to carry on.”*

Although Deborah was crushed, she found the strength to enroll in the *CLI Who Is God? Bible Study*. After she completed Lesson 3 “God Is Love” she says, “I felt a new peace—I can’t explain it—but I knew I was going to be okay. I know God loves me. It just happened. Now every day is better than the last.”

God worked through His word to reveal Himself to Deborah. He is a God of love who sent His only Son into the world that whoever believes in Him will have eternal life. Deborah’s struggle of “not being good enough” is being replaced by truth and a new confidence in Christ.

We all have different struggles, but our relationship with God develops and renews in the same way. We study God’s word. We trust what it says. We trust Him.

Shannon, also enrolled in the *Who Is God? Bible Study*. She writes, “I have found forgiveness (mercy) for my brother and this hatred I held was like a ton of bricks around my neck, weighing me down, drowning me daily. And because of this lesson last night, I feel free!”

Again, it was the truth of God’s word that set Shannon free. God’s word renews our minds and sets us on a path to know God and serve Him fully in our Lord Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit enables us to comprehend and live out the truth of Scripture. He makes us new spiritually and restores us to freshness, vigor and perfection. When we trust Jesus, we receive His Spirit, not only for our good, but for the good of others.

Jesus says to the Father, “As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.” Just like the original disciples, we too are being sent into the world with the truth. A former inmate named Drew sets this example for us. You can read his powerful story on the next page. If you aren’t already a Bible Minister, we invite you to join us. **Check out our website cli.world for more information. ■**

Former Inmate Gives Back Through CLI

By Logan Sides

Drew reached out to CLI in the fall because he wanted to become a CLI volunteer, specifically a Bible Minister. As a former student in two of our free inmate Bible studies, Drew knows firsthand the value of our ministry for the imprisoned. He writes, "They gave me a deeper, richer understanding of the lessons and readings of the Bible." He continued, "What I enjoyed even more was the feedback I received from the volunteer Bible Ministers."

These inmate Bible studies, which were all written by our Founder and Executive Director, Kathleen Skaar, provide brief lessons, study materials, and personal applications. Once a lesson is completed, the student will mail it to our Raleigh headquarters for processing before it is sent to a Bible Minister for review.

CLI students receive their reviewed lessons along with the next lesson to be completed in their study. Drew said that the feedback he received on his completed lessons "meant a lot to me" and "they always arrived when I needed them the most." Drew expressed that

these personal touches from volunteers provide true spiritual encouragement to inmates who sometimes do not regularly receive mail. "Getting the comments of 'I will pray about this' or 'good answer!' means a lot in such a dark place."

Drew grew up knowing about God while he was in boarding school, but he did not have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. As an adult, he had an enjoyable career, a home, a family, and money in the bank. Drew reflects on his life at that time saying he "had everything" but God.

It was in prison in the Northeast where Drew said that "God sat me down." He began a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ and finished reading the entire Bible within a few months. He also found Christian community inside the prison that provided him fellowship and an outlet for service. One evening during a prayer meeting with the other believers, various prayer requests were offered and then the list of requests was divided among multiple small groups to be prayed over. Drew remembers that as he began to pray over each of the housing units, he began crying and felt God's presence. He then felt the Lord calling him to care for people "spiritually" like he had done "physically" for nearly thirty years before as a healthcare worker.

Drew was released from prison during the summer of 2019. He has since been approved to begin volunteering as a CLI Bible Minister. Since his release, Drew has enjoyed connecting with his local church, working on his family farm, and spending time with his son. As he has grown in his faith, Drew sensed that one of his gifts for ministry is teaching. Now that he has re-entered his community, he said that he wants to "help those who are inside the wire now that I am 'outside' the

Ministry Stats from 2020

We will release our "God's Grace 2020 Annual Report" in the next few weeks. Ahead of that full report, here are a few highlights of our ministry in 2020.

4k

Decisions for Christ

18k

Bible Studies Reviewed

301k

Christian Books & Bibles Provided



Drew was disciplined as an inmate through the CLI Bible Studies.

wire." CLI Prison Alliance is grateful to partner with men like Drew in our mission to make disciples worldwide. We are even more grateful now to have him join our other 200+ Bible Ministers to share biblical truth with men and women in correctional facilities across the US. If you would like to learn more about our free Inmate Bible Studies or how to become a Bible Minister, you can learn more about both on our website cli.world. ■

Prayer at the Prison Gate Goes International

Virtual Option Expands Reach

For the first time ever, we added a totally new way to experience Prayer at the Prison Gate: virtually! On Saturday, December 5, 2020 chaplains and inmates were united in prayer with participants from over thirty states and our new international partners from Mexico and the Philippines. The 2020 Prayer at the Prison Gate event gathered around 300 individuals at 2 PM EST for one hour dedicated to intercession for various groups of people affected by incarceration.

Ernie White has been praying with a group outside the Wake Juvenile Detention Center for several years. This year Ernie's group had five people who prayed on-site for those on the other side of the prison fences. He said, "It was amazing to be with so many people" on the virtual call. Ernie was excited to see this event continue to grow as more people are finding out about it. For three people in his group, this was their first time participating. "I loved seeing the new people interested and joining in," said Ernie.

From across the Pacific Ocean, smiling faces from behind bars greeted everyone watching online. Pastor Jonnel Suyat's cellphone carried the images from that jail in the Philippines to Martha Carpenter's home. "It's a testimony of how God is raising up people," Martha said, who attended virtually this year. She was also encouraged by Linda Rodriguez and her



Ernie White led his group to pray outside Wake Juvenile Detention Center in Raleigh, NC.

team who gathered outside a prison in Mexico saying, "You didn't need to understand Spanish to see her enthusiasm."

Though it looked slightly different this year, we are thrilled with how everything went and have heard overwhelmingly positive feedback from those who attended. Prayer at the Prison Gate serves as a great reminder to all of us that the power to heal our communities and nation comes from God. We look forward in anticipation to the first Saturday in December each year, and we hope you will join us again or for the first time in 2021. ■

GET INVOLVED WITH CLI



Bible Ministers

Together with the Holy Spirit you will help inmates mature in their faith and make disciples. Review Bible study lessons, provide feedback, and encourage inmate students.



Letter Ministers

We connect believers *inside* with believers *outside*. Our letter ministry ensures inmates are heard, prayed for, and connected to all our resources.



Volunteer On-site

We have many Christian service opportunities at our headquarters in Raleigh, NC as well as at our Southeastern shipping hub in Buford, GA. You can join us in our offices and begin serving today!



Volunteering: How to Get Started

To learn more about volunteer opportunities with CLI visit our website at cli.world and click on **GET INVOLVED**.



In recognition of our compliance with Standards of Responsible Stewardship, CLI has been accredited by the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability.

