



Prison Alliance

Summer 2021 Newsletter



Founder and Executive Director Retires After 25 Years of Ministry

By Tim Curington

Kathleen Skaar felt called to full-time Christian ministry one year after her salvation experience in 1995. God used both godly mentors and Christian books to disciple her into the woman she is today.

Because books were so impactful in her own life, she wanted to share Christian books with others as well. From YMCAs to homeless shelters and even to missionary children around the world, Kathleen found a way to get Christian books into the hands of anyone willing to read their pages.



Kathleen began sharing books at Raleigh YMCAs in 1996.

Eventually the ministry narrowed its focus onto serving the chaplains and inmates in our country's many jails and prisons. The priority of evangelism and discipleship guided Kathleen to build our ministry around distributing Christian books, Bibles, and Bible studies to incarcerated men and women. Over the years, materials from CLI have been shipped to prisons and jails in all 50 states of the US. Recently, we expanded our program by beginning work in four additional countries.

Throughout the 25 years of Kathleen's leadership, CLI has received hundreds of letters from inmates telling of their changed lives thanks to her Bible studies. Ashley was one such inmate. She wrote:

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FOUNDER'S NOTE

If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.¹⁰ For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.



Kathleen Skaar, Founder

Romans 10:9-10

On April 23, 1995 I trusted Jesus as my Lord and Savior at a women's retreat. Since that time I have declared with my mouth and in various other kinds of communication: "Jesus is Lord." I do believe with all my heart that Jesus is the Son of God. He is fully God and fully man. I believe He died for my sins, was buried, and raised from the dead.

Less than a year after I gave my life to the Lord, He led me into service with the provision that this ministry would be built to the glory of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I have always tried to keep God's glory at the center of CLI.

CLI was incorporated as a nonprofit in March 8, 1996. That was 25 years ago. Anders was part of CLI from the beginning and came on board full-time in 2002.

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Founder and Executive Director Retires After 25 Years of Ministry

"Dear Kathleen,

I just want to thank you for following the voice of the Holy Spirit in ministering to those who are incarcerated. I'm 22 years old and have been sentenced to 20 years in Montana's women's prison. I was raised by a single mother of two, as a Roman Catholic in the outer city limits of Baltimore. I saw my mom struggle day in and day out for us to survive. One of my mom's most often repeated phrases is, "I'm so tired of being sick and tired." As a child it was hard to watch this battle of faith and despair.

As a Roman Catholic schoolgirl, I had religion class. I knew all about God and Jesus but had never cracked open a Bible. I knew that God was how everything came to be, but no one could tell me where God came from. I knew He was the reason for the rainbow and that He separated the Red Sea. I was taught that He tore down the walls of Jericho and allowed Jonah to be swallowed by the whale. I knew that Jesus was God's son, that he had done many miracles, and even died on the cross for my sins. I could recite all the best passages: the Beatitudes, Hail Mary, Our Father, Nicene Creed, and Glory Be. I knew the liturgical calendar and what the sacraments were. I knew how to genuflect and make the sign of the cross. But I did not know Jesus personally.

By the time I graduated 8th grade, I had decided I was not a practicing religious type of person. God didn't seem relevant since I never seemed to see Him working in my life. Well, I should have looked closer. He was working constantly, but I was looking for His roar and not His whisper. It was toward the end of my freshman year of high school that I finally chose to accept God in my heart for salvation.

Not long after that I turned again to my own vices. I started drinking at age 15

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FOUNDER'S NOTE

He worked full-time for 15 years with no compensation. We praise God for always providing for CLI and us.

God is now calling Anders and me to retire from CLI Prison Alliance and move to Opelika, Alabama near family. As you read this, please know how much we love and cherish each one of you. Some of you, family and friends, have been by our side for 25 years. We tear-up when we think of you and your zealous commitment to God and loyalty to us.

Other friends have joined us along the way, and we love and cherish each of you as well. One friend said that from the beginning she felt we were "kindred spirits." I agree! I also believe we have many "kindred spirits" who are reading this now. Thank you for your past service and your continued service at CLI.

Anders and I are leaving at a time when CLI Prison Alliance is extremely healthy and strong. It's fruitful and secure financially. We have a governing Board of Directors who are passionate about our mission and have the resources and capabilities to take CLI to the next level. We also have a well-trained staff. But the main reason CLI will prosper is because of God. He loves the imprisoned and desires everyone to be saved and obey Him.

Please know that Anders and I are only a phone call, text or email away. We are always ready to help you or CLI in any way we can. We're committed to see CLI bring glory to God and grow to the next level.

God Bless You! ■



From left: CLI volunteers Joanne Donaton, Lainie Hoverstad and Kathleen in 2000.

and began to lie, cheat, and steal. It was all about me. I became pregnant at age 17. I was struggling to make ends meet and soon was caring for a newborn. I spent a lot of time homeless. Everything always came down to money. Two years later, my son, Caleb, died.

The grief that comes over a parent after losing a child is like none other, but few understand how such a loss can be used by God in our lives. God used your ministry to help comfort me and bring me to this understanding of joy. I found your address stamped in the back of a book I was

reading a couple of months ago and finally decided to reach out. I praise God for His sovereignty. I now know that one day I will see God face to face and hold Caleb once again."

Countless letters from inmates just like Ashley have been received over the years,

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Coming Alongside: How CLI Partners with Churches

By Logan Sides

No matter your church's size or location, it can serve the inmates of your community by partnering with CLI. CLI Prison Alliance seeks to come alongside those churches who are burdened for the inmates in their nearby jails and prisons, and the over two million inmates currently in the US prison system. Our program has accessible opportunities for a church just getting started with prison ministry and advanced resources for churches with established outreach ministries.

For The Summit Church in North Carolina, CLI was able to meet a need created by access restrictions to local correctional facilities. Christa Smith, the Associate Director of Prison Ministry for the Summit Church, said that before the pandemic lockdowns, CLI "was one of a few on a list of prison ministry partners," and there

were already some people from the church serving in roles with CLI. Once facilities could no longer accept outside visitors, the prison ministry team began meeting virtually for prayer, not knowing when they could return to normal outreach.

During that uncertain time, someone from CLI joined one of these prayer meetings and told the eager volunteers, "we are ready!" Because the CLI discipleship program utilizes mail-based correspondence, we were uniquely prepared to continue investing in the spiritual lives of inmates, despite the enduring period of lockdowns. After that prayer meeting, CLI got a permanent spot on their website and plans were made for a formal CLI interest meeting. Jill Kearney, Program Director, presented our ministry to that group of prospective volunteers.

Since then, we have been honored to welcome more and more volunteers from The Summit, and to represent a growing part of their robust outreach ministry. Christa expresses the crucial place prison ministry can play in a church's overall outreach plan, saying, "Once you start looking for it, you can see how incarceration impacts many other vulnerable populations in a community, like people experiencing homelessness, those struggling with substance abuse, or disconnected youth who may be in what is termed 'the school to prison pipeline'."



What is the next step for your church? If your church is looking to start or restart prison ministry in 2021, visit our website and click on the "Get Involved" page to learn about our serving teams and other opportunities to engage. ■

and each life touched by our ministry can be traced back to the day Kathleen gave her life to Christ in full surrender to His will for her. What about you? No matter who you are, God has a plan and a purpose for you. Have you received His free gift of salvation through Jesus? He longs to save you and give you eternal life if you will only call on Him in faith, repenting of your sin, accepting Him as the only way of eternal life. If you are His disciple, then what is it that He is calling you to do in service to Him? Let today be the day that you surrender to the Holy Spirit's leading and take up your cross daily to follow Him.

Praise God with us for the legacy of faithfulness shown by Kathleen and Anders through their ministry with CLI Prison Alliance! May their next chapter be filled with joy and new avenues for continued service to the Lord. ■

At a Glance

In the first three months of 2021, we can already see a significant increase in our ministry's reach. For example, see this chart to compare this quarter, to last year's first quarter. ■

Stat	Q1 2020	Q1 2021	% Change
 New Enrollments	1,527	1,924	26%
 Active Students	3,546	4,507	27%
 Decisions for Christ	749	3,592	379%

Florida Chaplain Relies on CLI Bible Studies During Pandemic

When preachers and volunteers could no longer conduct worship services inside Orange County Corrections Department, Chaplain Leo Gonzalez made a pivot to CLI to meet the need of the hour. Spurred by the COVID-19 pandemic, he turned to CLI's mail-based Bible Study Courses, so that inmates could continue growing spiritually while incarcerated.

For most chaplains, their relationship with CLI begins when they request our Bibles and books for their facility libraries. Initially, they may only be familiar with the resource distribution aspect of our ministry, but we take every opportunity to also educate chaplains on our free inmate Bible Study Courses. Since every book is stamped with CLI's contact information, inmates are directly invited to reach out to CLI each time they open one of our donated resources. However, when a chaplain is bought in to our vision, they can facilitate an even closer connection between inmates and CLI.

This February, the Orange County Corrections Department wrote about how the CLI program stands out among other ministries in their "Corrections Chronicle" newsletter. Master Correctional Officer Thomas Bulone wrote, "Although there are many self-study Bible programs, most are either far too simplistic, leading to boredom, or way too complicated, requiring the skills of a Bible scholar to properly interpret lessons." He continued, "Almost none provide any guidance or encouragement to the participant as they progress through the program."



Six inmates in Florida recently completed our Bible Study Course

Like the leadership, the inmate students themselves celebrated the wonderful experience they had interacting with CLI volunteers as they studied God's Word. One student said, "The Bible study program really helped us during the COVID-19 pandemic. Instead of wasting time, we really got to know God and become closer to him." Another said, "With the coaching and encouragement provided by the CLI counselors, it is definitely a course I recommend for others to pursue."

As hard as the last year has been for all of us, our hearts especially go out to all those imprisoned whose daily rhythms have been dramatically affected by safety precautions. We are overjoyed that our program was found by this facility, so that the work of discipling inmates would not be interrupted. ■

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.

