

Transforming Our Prisons

A New Prayer Movement Offers Hope

by Frank Sambrick

A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

Ecclesiastes 4:12

Deep beneath the stark, concrete landscape of America's prisons, a new movement is taking root. Just below the layers of rage, hopelessness and resignation, a dim light is beginning to shine. While many inmates are joining forces to form vicious gangs, a few are coming together to form prayer teams. And their numbers are growing.



On the recommendation of a single CLI volunteer, inmate-organized prayer teams are springing up in our prisons. For more than a decade, CLI has ministered to the individual behind bars. Now, through the power of corporate prayer, CLI prayer teams – the brainchild of CLI volunteer Suzy D'Alessandro – are bringing inmates together to experience the power of the Holy Spirit in one another.

They are praying for fellow inmates, prison guards and wardens as well as many people and causes outside prison walls. Suzy believes the new prayer teams are a natural progression for CLI's ministry. "CLI's emphasis on prayer teams for imprisoned Christians furthers the mission of empowering faithful, strong soldiers for Christ on the front lines," she said.

The first inmate to volunteer to lead a prayer team was Cynthia McBroom, a CLI prayer warrior. CLI Inmate Prayer Warriors like Cynthia are scattered across our prisons and are the driving force in the creation of new prayer teams.

Cynthia was at first reluctant to step out of her comfort zone to enlist fellow inmates. "I tried to talk God out of it," she recalled, "saying how unfit I am, but he knows me better than I know myself. I know now that he wanted me to start this prayer team and to just trust him for everything that we need." Cynthia's prayer team is one of 22 that have sprung up across the country in just over a month's time. And more are on the way.

Each inmate that volunteers to lead a prayer team receives a prayer team packet from CLI that instructs them in the principles and the power of corporate prayer. It includes examples of how, who and what to pray for, supported by related Bible verses.

There are no guidelines for how these prayer teams are structured. Inmates often have to build their teams around the many restrictions of prison life. The challenges are many. Perhaps the greatest challenge of all is finding that one inmate with the spiritual courage to take the first step of reaching out to fellow inmates in their cellblock. Yet the number of prayer teams continues to grow and new prayer team leaders are stepping forward, despite the challenges. Inmate Kimberly Nicholson is just one example. "I have been wanting to be a Prayer Warrior and start a prayer team," she said in a recent letter to CLI. "However, until now, that door had not opened for me. Thank you so much. This is truly an answered prayer for me."

A dim light is beginning to shine in our prisons. Somewhere out there another inmate is joining a CLI prayer team. And the light glows a little brighter.

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