

A creative way to keep in touch on the outside

by Rose Admiraal



This fall, New Life sent a devotional—*New Morning Mercies* by Paul David Tripp—to 21 men who have been released from the Newton Correctional Facility.

Along with the book, we sent an inquiry about forming a monthly Bible study or prayer group. We discovered that many men were interested, but they were from every corner of Iowa, and there was even one from Illinois.

Even though we all feel fatigue from so many Zoom meetings, we decided Zoom might be a creative way to encourage the men. At 4 p.m. on January 30, we had our first virtual meeting. Eleven people joined for an hour of discussion. It was incredible to hear how God is working in their lives! At 7 p.m. on February 10, we hosted another Zoom. Two men returned, and there were also two new faces—God is moving in lives!

We will continue meeting virtually on the second Wednesday and final Saturday of each month. These men need your prayers; many commented that being a Christian out of prison is even harder than being one on the inside. Praise God for the work He is doing through New Life!

Living in difficult days

by Pastor Rick

It's been one year since New Life volunteers and mentors were "locked out" of the prison. Meanwhile, the prison congregation has been "locked in," dealing with the virus.

It's been difficult for the men on the inside since they've experienced an outbreak. The numbers are overwhelming. Newton currently has 204 inmates and 3 staff members who are positive for COVID-19. Newton also has 585 inmates and 47 staff members who were positive at one time but have recovered. (Data as of March 1, 2021, <https://doc.iowa.gov/COVID19>)

Recently, the first Newton prisoner died due to COVID-related causes. His name was Kevin. I knew him. He didn't attend our groups, but he came once a month to receive greeting cards in the prison chapel. Kevin always smiled and stayed positive despite his lengthy prison sentence. Pray for God to comfort his loved ones. Cry out to the Lord along with each prisoner: "In your righteousness, rescue me and deliver me; turn your ear to me and save me." (Psalm 71:2)

Prayers & praises

by Rose Admiraal

We give thanks and praise for:

- Ten years of New Life Prison Church!
- Three successful Zoom sessions with men who have been released from the Newton Correctional Facility.
- The men returning to society who are doing well!

We ask for prayer for:

- The men in prison to feel God's presence during this time of isolation.
- Health at the Newton Correctional Facility.
- Our elder, Dave Gritters, as he and his wife Cindy spend two months working in Haiti.
- The health of our council and church.
- Reconciliation and healing in families broken by crime.
- Pastor Rick and Rose, that they will be able to return to the prison in due time.



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Zoom meeting: Sharing ten years of memories

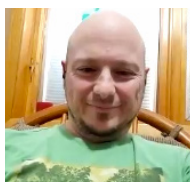
by Pastor Rick

On February 21, we spent a Sunday afternoon on Zoom with New Life members, sharing memories and celebrating New Life's tenth anniversary.

Rose remembered Jason, who was feeling like his life was worthless. From the hallway, Jason heard Christian songs coming from our Bible study group. He entered the room. "Our music saved Jason's life," recalled Rose. Jason would later become the first person baptized in New Life Prison Church.

Ron Turner was also baptized in the prison gym. Ron shared, "You did a lot for me. I'll never forget you. I'm glad I went to prison; otherwise, I would've never found Jesus!"

Chris Losh enjoyed the fun and interaction of Brothers in Blue. He also let us know that the worship services with communion were really important.



Chris Losh speaks on Zoom.

Glenda Vander Leest recalled the first time she volunteered inside the walls: "I walked out feeling blessed."

Some of us remembered severe weather we encountered, like blizzards and the damaging tornado of July 2018. Overall, God has been faithful. Let's thank Him for ten great years!



Rose shares a memory on Zoom while Rick listens with Dwight and Glenda Vander Leest.

New Life video: Celebrating ten years of blessings

by Pastor Rick

To mark New Life's anniversary, we recently made a video celebrating ten years of God's grace.



To watch it, search "New Life Prison Church tenth anniversary" on YouTube. Thanks to Jim Williams for compiling 19 cell phone videos from volunteers, mentors, and friends. In the videos, these individuals share about New Life's ministry, focusing on themes like strength, passion, gratitude, joy, and hope.

For example, commissioned member Joel Waltz spoke about family. "I know family is super important for us all, and family looks really different for us all too," he said. "For the brothers at Newton Correctional Facility, I know New Life is like family to them. There are very few who, like Jesus, are willing to go to places to see and be with people who are considered the outcasts of society. I know the guys appreciate it greatly."

We've had some great responses to our video. Paul Wagner wrote:

What an awesome video! I really loved seeing all the faces of the volunteers I had the opportunity to meet while incarcerated. It's crazy how many people are involved with New Life! Some people don't receive visits from family or friends. The volunteers who sacrifice their time to be part of New Life are a blessing. It was a privilege to have the opportunity to get to know you guys and all the volunteers as well. Thank you for all you do and for the love, peace, and joy New Life brings!

Fran De Haan, a New Life volunteer, wrote, "Well done video! Congratulations on the ten-year anniversary. God has truly blessed this ministry!"

"Happy tenth anniversary to New Life," wrote Brothers in Blue volunteer Connie Hung. "Thank you for your faithfulness and steadfast love to the inmates. May our Lord continue to bless you with many more decades to come until the glorious second coming of Jesus Christ." Amen!



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