

Back in prison?

by Rose Admiraal

Rick and I recently traveled to Philadelphia to celebrate his mom's eightieth birthday. On May 20, we ventured back into prison.

Well, not the Newton Correctional Facility or any other modern-day prison; instead, we visited the Eastern State Penitentiary in Philadelphia. Having housed inmates from 1829 to 1970, it's one of the oldest prisons in the United States. Its solitary confinement style was created by the Quakers. The idea was that inmates would reform when they had a Bible and solitude.

That theory has proven ineffective over the years. After visiting the penitentiary in 1842, Charles Dickens observed, "The System is rigid, strict and hopeless solitary confinement, and I believe it, in its effects, to be cruel and wrong."

The penitentiary's eerie cement hallways and small, individualized outdoor spaces are confining and bleak. I am so glad improvements have been made in today's prisons. Even though prison is not a pleasant place now, it was even worse back then. Tuberculosis ran rampant, mainly because they did not know enough about the disease or how to properly treat it. After four hours of wandering around and learning about the history of the prison, we left for lunch.



An old guard tower at the Eastern State Penitentiary.

Unfortunately, this trip is the only opportunity we've had to get back into prison so far. We miss the men in our prison congregation. We can't wait to get back inside and share God's love with our brothers!

Pruned for more

by Geoff Roberts

Geoff lives in Rippey and works in Des Moines, Iowa. After a long period of waiting, he is being reunited with his two young daughters. Thanks be to God!

I recently read through John 15. It brought about many questions, including some I've struggled to find peace with. In the midst of the turmoil I faced, God was there to speak through His Word and cut to my heart.

In verse two, Jesus says, "He cuts off every branch of mine that doesn't produce fruit, and he prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more" (John 15:2, NLT).

Continued on back

An invitation to participate

by Pastor Rick

Want to make a big difference in the world?

I invite you to participate in New Life Prison Church. God may be calling you to join the prayer team or to give financially. Mentoring or volunteering are other ways you could get involved.

Currently, we have 37 commissioned members, but we'd like to add to that number. A commissioned member belongs to two churches—their outside congregation and the prison congregation.

Make a big impact by accepting this invitation to participate in New Life. You can do this!

Pedal for Prisoners XII

by Pastor Rick

Pedal for Prisoners is now in its twelfth year!

It's our number-one fundraiser and such a great way to raise financial support for New Life Prison Church.

Our purpose is to help New Life thrive—we hope you will encourage all our cyclists by giving a donation. May the Lord inspire you to bless those behind bars.

Will you sponsor us?



Pastor Rick Admiraal

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EMAIL: PastorRick@newlife-prison.org

WEBSITE: www.newlife-prison.org

BLOG: newlifeprisonchurch.blogspot.com

Find us on Facebook:

www.facebook.com/NewLifePrisonCommunity

Please support Pedal for Prisoners XII

I'd like to donate \$ _____ to support New Life Prison Church.

NAME: _____ ADDRESS: _____

Contributions may be sent to: **New Life Prison Church, 408 Maple St., Pella, IA 50219**

You can also make an online gift: <http://www.newlife-prison.org/donate>

Pruned for more

Continued from front

I didn't understand the pruning and cutting-off process. Then, a revelation occurred: In my yard, I have three trees that are probably older than I am. I started to realize that the lower branches had become dead and never bloomed or even produced leaves. So this spring, I cut them down and now use those branches as firewood because they burn better than the young trees I have tried to clear away.

God does the same thing in our lives. It isn't that He waits for fruit—He waits to see corrosion and death. As Romans 6:23 says, "The wages of sin is death." That remains true. When sin enters, it does not produce fruit. The limb becomes dead, and it can become a hindrance to the whole tree as that death spreads to other branches. God cuts off death because He does not want to lose the whole for the sake of the part.

So today I ask: What is dead in your life? What is causing you to step away from God? Whatever the answer is, give it to Him. Allow Him to cut it out to save the blessings of good fruit. The severance may be painful, but the pain is to bring you closer to Him.

God bless you, my friends!

New Life Prison Church Outside Council

Dave Gritters (Governing Elder)

Keith Van Gent (Governing Elder)

Jim Williams (Administrative Deacon)

Tricia De Haan (Administrative Deacon)

Pastor Rick Admiraal (New Life)

Duane Bruxvoort (Federated Fellowship)

Tim Franje (Peoria CRC, represents the Classis Missions Committee)

April Nieuwsma (Treasurer)



Mentor spotlight: Pastor Sheldon Starkenburg

Pastor Sheldon is retiring after serving as a minister at Calvary CRC for over 20 years. He has two daughters, Regina and Ramona. He regularly prays for New Life Prison Church and serves as a mentor.

1. What's next for you?

I'm retiring, but I plan to continue working on a half-time basis at Calvary. Hopefully, I'll have a little more time to go fishing!

2. What do you enjoy most about your time as a mentor?

I've been a mentor for about seven years now. Of course, because of COVID-19, no visits were allowed for about a year and a half. But now that I'm able to visit at Newton Correctional Facility again, I really appreciate the time my mentee and I are able to spend together. We come from pretty different worlds, but in Christ we share a strong sense of brotherhood and mutual support.

3. Why do you feel inspired to help men in prison?

When Pastor Rick began his prison ministry, I was very excited to volunteer with him and Rose. I enjoyed going into the prison, worshipping with the men, and learning with them. They were always so appreciative of our willingness to come into Newton Correctional Facility to be a blessing to them. When Pastor Rick asked me to consider being a mentor, I was happy to do so. I saw it as an opportunity to go deeper in getting to know a specific inmate, walking with him during his time in prison, and being an encouragement to him.

4. How is New Life Prison Church making a big impact?

Even though Pastor Rick, Rose, and the volunteers are still not able to get into the prison for services and Bible study, they are still worshipping on the outside and sending their services into the prison on DVDs. This connection reminds the men that they are not forgotten—that there are people on the outside who care about them and are there to support them.

5. What do you think of the fact that mentors (but not volunteers) are permitted into the prison?

It doesn't make sense to me that volunteers are not able to get into the prison to do services and Bible studies. There really is no COVID-19 protocol in place for mentors and visitors to inmates. No masks, no distancing, etc. So it is hard to understand why the volunteers cannot come in to do services.

6. How has being involved with New Life been a blessing to you?

Being a mentor has been a blessing to my life as I've gotten to know my inmate on a deeper level. We have been able to encourage each other when we go through tough times. My daughter refers to the inmate I mentor as, "Daddy's friend _____," and that really is who he is. He is my friend and my Christian brother. Who couldn't use another friend?

SAVE THE DATE
Sunday, July 17, 9:30 a.m.

New Life Prison Church will lead outdoor worship at **Red Rock's Fifield Recreation Area** (1672 Hwy G 28, Pella, IA 50219). A fellowship meal will follow worship. **Bring lawn chairs and a dish to pass!**