

INSIDE *view*

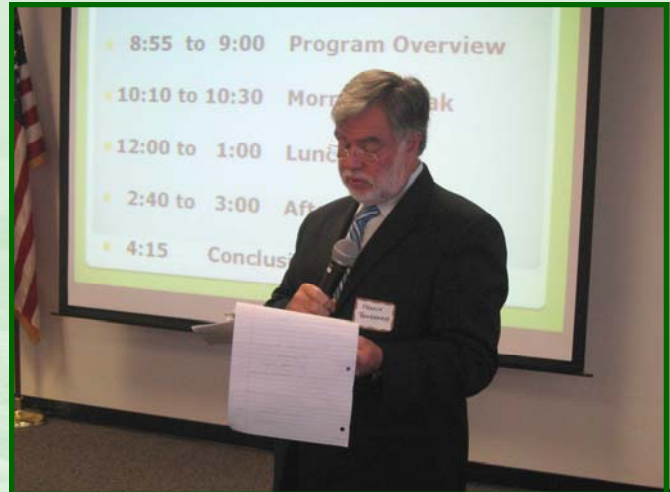
...when in

prison, you

Correctional Institutions Chaplaincy

C L E R G Y D A Y A N D T H E C O U R T S

The Santa Clara County Superior Court and CIC Ministries hosted “Clergy Day and the Courts” day. Seventy clergy members and ministers from many denominations and religions came together to learn how to better serve their congregation when their congregants find themselves involved with the county court system. Ministers and clergy members came from all over Santa Clara County to hear presentations from Judges and court personnel. Among the various courts and topics presented were: Superior Court and alternate resources for citizens, domestic violence, juvenile justice — delinquency, mental health court and drug issues, mandatory reporting, juvenile dependency court, probate — elders and case management. Making resources such as court navigation information available to clergy and religious ministers



SCC Superior Court Judge—The Honorable Frank Bondonno

will give congregants and ex-offenders, much needed support. We hope to offer this event again next year.

L o n g t i m e v o l u n t e e r s e e s l i v e s c h a n g e

Roger Hooks has been working with boys at Juvenile Hall for about 15 years, and in that time, he has seen reasons for hope as the boys hear and learn from the Gospel message that Hooks brings them.

“The problems are the same. Just the faces change,” Hooks said of his time in Juvenile Hall.

He has been there so long that sometimes he sees boys on the light rail or in the community and they approach him. “Do you remember me?” they ask, and when he recognizes their faces, they tell him of their success in leaving Juvenile Hall.

He doesn’t always know their stories very well because “when I first started, the setting wasn’t so intimate. I didn’t get to talk with them. When I started, we were in the gym and there were 100 guys. It was more of a service. Now it’s more of a Bible study.”

Hooks become interested in ministering to the

boys in Juvenile Hall after watching a family member go through the system and struggle to find a better life.

“I always thought it was phase he was going through. I didn’t take it seriously. It turned out to be an ongoing thing that consumed more than half his life,” he said. “That’s the reason I do it now. So the kids know where it (their drug use) could lead.”

He knows the boys are listening. Once he ran into a young man on the light rail and young man said his relationship with his parents had improved and he had continued his schooling after leaving Juvenile Hall.

Another time, Hooks was at a black-tie event and a young man approached him and told him that he had turned his life around with the help of God. “I have been fortunate to see that the time I put in pays off in their lives,” he said.

He urges others to get involved in ministering to

(Please see CHANGED, page 2)



Boys follow one another into the worship service.

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 those behind bars, but it's a difficult task. People find that it's not an easy ministry, but then again, "Nobody said that the world is going to be easy," he said. "I accept that. It's what I do as my service."

His reward comes through other blessings in his life, blessings that he has come to appreciate.

When the Elmwood Chapel opened about 15 years ago we were gifted with an electronic keyboard. This keyboard has served faithfully, often playing at some 12 services a week, is now dying. We are in great need of a new instrument. If you are able to respond to this need please contact David Robinson. The brothers in the Elmwood Chapel will be eternally grateful.

THE FRONTLINE OF THE KINGDOM:
 BRINGING HOPE TO THOSE LOCKED UP

By Tony West
 CIC volunteer

If you're anything like me, the thought of going in to a jail to visit inmates on a regular basis filled me with considerable apprehension. I'm not a naturally gregarious/outgoing type, so the idea of meeting a lot of (strange? scary?) guys I didn't know in a (weird? unsafe?) environment like jail stirred up anxiety and apprehension.

Why on earth would I ever want to do this, I thought?

Well, I did it anyway and, soon, it will be two years now that I've been going (a miracle in itself). I now know *exactly* why I do this!

From the many inmates I've met in that time, I can see God often uses the "time out" nature of jail to create an opportunity for them to take stock of where they are

with their lives and make new decisions to go about things fundamentally differently.

Many are repeat offenders -- they've been "round the track" several, maybe even many times,

and they have come to realize firsthand that, although *there's a way that seems right to a man, it leads to death:*

they can't figure out how to overcome their issues in their own way or in their own strength.

So what's their alternative? When they start looking around, the Shepherd is waiting to scoop them up and bring them into His love. It really

doesn't take much to talk about the good news of the Kingdom to those who are desperate for a different answer to life.

So the reason to go to jail is because this is a place, locally, where you

can experience the front line of the Kingdom. God is present, moment by moment, and you can see and experience firsthand how His hand on the inmates is changing

their lives miraculously in front of your very eyes.

It's so inspiring to go there and see the earnestness and commitment that inmates bring to the Lord, to see their desperation turn into submission, then

trust, then peace, then resolve. That process seems to happen at an accelerated pace compared to what I've seen outside. It's so energizing/refreshing to have the privilege to come alongside these folks as they turn their lives over to Jesus and to be able to be there to encourage them and pray for them.

So, basically, if you ever wanted to see God's Kingdom in action - go to jail! I go because I need to be close to God, and this is one place He's not only present, but extremely active. Going to jail refreshes, strengthens and encourages me! It's become a very special kind of home-group to me.

Consider coming along to see what it's like, and don't worry, our team will take care of you.

"So the reason to go to jail is because this is a place, locally, where you can experience the front line of the Kingdom."

GOD'S ONGOING WORK BEHIND BARS

**By David Robinson
Executive Director**

This drawing by a woman prisoner is a deep reflection of her spiritual hunger for God's love. The baby Jesus and his family are tenderly held in the Lord's hands, as is she, as are the other prisoners, as we are too.

In the harsh environment of the juvenile hall and the jails, where hands are used more for punishment, people long for the comforting embrace of the One who loves us all.

These are the hands that reach out to those who need lifting up, for those that need to be taken by the hand and led out of the wilderness and teach us how to hold on even when everything around says give up.

In the Juvenile Hall

and ranches, in the women's jail and men's lockups we are God's hands, providing love, comfort, encouragement, teaching and guidance. Without your devotion to the Call of Jesus and your support of His ministry people would be even more desperate and without hope.

As ministers of the Gospel we are empowered by the Holy Spirit to serve in ways that often utterly astound us. We are able to transcend our fears and our judgments as well as see the reality of God's love where there no one else is able to perceive. We find we are blessed in profound ways.

As ministers of the Gospel, serving directly in the jails or indirectly by financially and



A Native American inmate depicts the hands of God holding the family of the Messiah. God holds every one and every family.

prayerfully supporting the ministry, our own lives our fulfilled.

Is there anything more important than becoming an instrument of Grace, sharing Jesus' love with those who crave his attention?

We are grateful to our God for this honor of serving Him through serving some of the least of our brothers, sisters and children. We also are very appreciative of

your recognizing this ministry as a priority in your life.

We know working together bound by the power of the Holy Spirit and trusting our lives to be used as instruments of love the Kingdom will continue to build and our community will be not just safer but will know the Peace that is promised to each of us.

FOOTHILLS CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH – UCC LOS ALTOS VOLUNTEERS



Foothills Jail Ministry Team

**By Bob Willwerth
CIC volunteer**

I'm pretty confident that Rev. Evelyn Vigil would agree with me that our two main purposes in leading church services at Elmwood are 1) to help reduce the number of inmates who return to custody after their release and 2) to help make the inmates' time in

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CIC MINISTRIES

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prison more tolerable by fostering a Christian community for them there. Several inmates' comments on a recent Sunday evening were very encouraging in this regard. Some brief examples:

One man said he is resolved to join his wife and children in a church-going life after he's released. He thinks his wife will be totally surprised but he wants so much to be a good husband and father to their children, and church involvement is a good way of helping him do that. "My wife and I met in church but then I never attended. But I've become a Christian now." Our response: "Your wife will love the new you."

Another spoke about trust and faith in other people, which was raised during the sermon. He said, "I grew up not trusting anyone -- because it wasn't safe to do so.

But after listening to your message I'm beginning to see that it would really be very nice -- a much more enjoyable way to live."

About 50 inmates attended our service and several responded to our invitation for them to ask for prayers -- usually for their families for whom they're concerned. One man stood up and said that he originally wasn't going to say anything but then, after listening to a few others, he decided he would like to do so. After the end of the service he came forward with several others to thank us for coming. We thanked him for speaking up in the service and wished him well.

It was clear that there was a bond among the attendees and a genuine appreciation for our bringing an hour of Christian fellowship to them. Besides, they sang the hymns with gusto!

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