



Linda and David Harris help Juvenile Hall celebrate Black History Month

History and hope lifted in song

Before Linda and David Harris, a wonderful brother-sister singing team, sang for the boys and girls at Juvenile Hall for Black History Month, they took time to talk about the Rev. Dr. Charles Albert Tindley, an American Methodist minister and gospel music composer.

Tindley, a great- great-great uncle of the Harris, set the bar high for composers – and for preachers. He had 47 hymns credited to his name and though he died in 1933 at the age of 82, he still has six hymns published in the current United Methodist Hymnal, which is used around the world. He also was the first hymn writer to have a hymn copyrighted.

His father was a slave, but his mother was free, which meant that he was considered free as well, though he grew up among slaves. After the Civil War, he moved to Philadelphia and worked as a janitor while pursuing his education. He taught himself Hebrew and Greek and then earned a doctorate, and 25 years after he served as a janitor, he led his church from 130 members to a congregation of 10,000.

“I’ll Overcome Someday,” his composition, is believed by many to be the basis for the civil rights anthem “We Shall Overcome,” news that the Harris imparted to the boys and girls that day. And the boys and girls listened.

See HARRIS page 2

**“When I was
in prison, you
visited me.”**

Matthew 25:36

Following is a quote from an inmate who has been in and out of incarceration and has known a CIC volunteer chaplain for many years:

“Lois is dear to me. She was the first Bible study teacher I had in 1979. Through all my difficulties in my life, Lois placed the desire in my heart to believe that no matter what - ‘God has a purpose for me.’ She said, ‘Focus on God, not the world or yourself.’ I learned Proverbs 3:5 from her and I’ve held it to my memory since 1979, ‘Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding.’ She is a saint.”

Equipping the Saints to better carry the Word

Providing Bible studies and worship services and one-on-one pastoral care that truly reflects God's love for us and our love for God means getting prepared before walking in the door of jail.

That's exactly what CIC Ministries hopes to do with its special 10-month program of training sessions that give Bible study teachers greater depth in dealing with the kinds of problems that can come up during a session.

Seasoned volunteers, especially pastors, are encouraged to attend a monthly roundtable to discuss issues of substance abuse, small-group management, spiritual direction, depression and suicide – all the issues that affect the men, women and children who ask for spiritual care.

Volunteers without that depth of experience attend a different kind of class, though it covers the same topics. They learn how drug and alcohol addiction impairs a person's consideration of themselves and others and often hampers a person's ability to conceive of

a God whose essence is love.

A recent class looked at substance abuse and how churches and 12-step programs can help people in addiction, but the focus was on the Bible-study leader who needed to recognize a person who was addicted and find a way to talk about God's grace and love as the path to a new life.

Participants discussed their experiences: what touched hearts and what didn't. They discussed what kinds of issues people are bringing to the Bible study and what it means to be addicted to things that harm us.

The classes, taught by CIC facility chaplains, focus on the ways God's Word is working in the world and in our lives and how we can bring that message of hope and love to those who are hungry to hear it.

The classes are by invitation only, though new volunteers who think these classes would help them are encouraged to speak to their facility chaplain for inclusion in the next round.

HARRIS, Continued from Page 1

They listened and sang with the HARRISes when asked to stand and join in a few verses of "This Little Light of Mine."

David's guitar playing and Linda's beautiful soprano voice led all those in the Juvenile Hall gym into movement and song and a sense of uplifting hope in God.

DONATIONS:

CIC Ministries is a non-profit agency, 501c3.

In these difficult economic times, any donation is appreciated, but you might want to get a sense of where your money goes exactly.

Please turn to Page 7 for a listing of opportunities to bring the Gospel behind bars.

We will provide a receipt for your donation.

You may also donate online

www.cicministries.org

We would be glad to come to church with you

Our chaplains are available to present the details of our ministry to your congregation (church services, Sunday school classes, mission boards and other groups you think would benefit from knowing more about CIC's ministry in the jails).

Please call or email to schedule our visit with your church.

Building community in more than name

By REV. RA AMEN

Juvenile Hall Chaplain

Maria Luz Herrera, Blanca Reyes and Francisca Lopez, from Comunidad Cristiana in San Jose, are members of a new volunteer team at the Wright Center teaching a weekly Bible study class to the girls. Just as their church has a warm and welcoming spirit of hospitality so too do these ladies.



two of the girls help with translating the lesson from Spanish to English. This task is normally done by Blanca, who was unable to attend.

Maria Luz closes with a challenge to the girls. She asks them, "Do you want to have a relationship with God and an abundant life?" Francisca

plays a song titled, "Give Thanks to God." One of the girls sings a beautiful but touching song in Spanish. It is a song she has written to God asking for forgiveness. Next, she reads the lyrics in English.

As she is reading, I realize that she has felt comfortable enough to share something very personal that is burdening her heart to the point she must ask God for forgiveness. Realizing that Bible study is not the place to share such intimate and hurting feelings, I thank her for feeling comfortable enough with the group to share her burden and to trust us to help her to deal with it. I ask her to allow us to close the group in prayer after which, the ladies and I will give her pastoral counseling.

We close the Bible study in prayer. We invite the counselor present to join us. She has been studying her Bible along with us as she kept one watchful eye over us. We ask her would she like to do the closing prayer and she obliges us with a heartfelt and sincere prayer for all of our well-being asking that we will grow and prosper in the Lord.

After the counselor takes the other girls back to their pods, we meet with the young lady to help her deal with her hurt. I ask whether she would be more comfortable talking with the ladies only since it is a female issue.

Please see COMMUNITY, Page 7

They are extremely caring, and supportive of the young girls at the Wright Center, and the girls love and appreciate them. One night when I attended their Bible study, a student ran up to Maria Luz and gave her a big welcoming smile and engaged her in a personable conversation. That smile told me how much she and the other girls appreciated these ladies coming into their lives to share themselves and the Gospel. They share the Gospel not only in words but also in dance as Blanca, a dance teacher, teaches the girls praise dancing.

Maria Luz led the Bible study accompanied by Francisca. The lesson is from John 3:1-8, the story of Jesus and Nicodemus. One of the girls read the text. The theme of the lesson is "How to have a good relationship with God." Maria makes three points with the help of Francisca, with me chiming in on occasions to share the male perspective: 1) Receive God in your heart and "be born again" because God wants to have a personal relationship with you; 2) Read your Bible so that you can learn about God and what God's will is for your life; 3) Pray regularly in order to keep your relationship with God strong. Lastly, remember, she tells the girls, "there is no sin too great that God cannot forgive you for and sin no longer has a hold of your life. God wants you to have an abundant life." Throughout the Bible study,

One step after another leads to decades of service

Lois Bingham took the first step: She listened for God’s call on her life.

Then she took the second step: She acted on that call. And for decades the women at the Correctional Center for Women have benefited.

“I was a fairly new Christian when we started (coming to the jail),” she said, but “the Lord has really blessed me with it. I always felt the Lord led me into it and helped me grow and mature in my Christian walk.”

As her walk with Christ has grown deeper over the 40 years she has served as a volunteer, she has touched countless souls along the way – something she could not have seen when she first got started.

Back then Elmwood Correctional Center had a few barracks for the men and the women were housed in one unit when Lois and her husband Carrol Bingham decided to volunteer.

Chaplain Omsby told her there was only one building for the women and he sent her in alone, with the suggestion that she start a Bible study with the women. Chaplain Walker added a bit more information: “He said, ‘You teach the Bible study and I’ll do the counseling.’”

With that bit of instruction, she entered Felony West, where the tables and chairs were bolted to the floor, and that’s where she held her Bible study class.

“All the years I was there, I never felt threatened or harmed in any way,” she said.

Then the chaplains gave her names of women who sought additional care, and “I would just try to show them Scripture, pray with them...” Lois said, laughing as she remembered an older woman in custody who said to her recently, “I remember you from waaaay back, ’75 or so.”

Carrol became active in the Gideons and



Lois Bingham - CIC Volunteer for 40 years.

Lois joined in 1990 after she retired.

Though she didn’t have much of an introduction to the correctional system when she began back in the 1970s, she has been helping new volunteers learn how to prepare and offer Bible studies that speak to the women who are locked up and have many worried.

Helen Hooks of St. Paul Missionary Baptist Church said Lois and Carrol were members of the church with her and the three of them joined Rev. Harris’ “Willing Workers.” And Rev. Harris put them to work.

In addition to teaching Bible studies with the women, Carroll and Lois would meet Helen for lunch and then they would head to the Boys Ranch in south county to provide services for the young men.

“The Lord enabled us,” Carroll said of those days.

“They’re wonderful people,” Hooks said. “She has a wonderful heart.”

At a recent gathering to honor Lois women she helped to train spoke out about how much she means to them

See LOIS page 6

Learning to see with the eyes of Jesus

Once there was a newly married couple who just moved in next door. One day the woman hanged their new sheets on the clothes line. The wife next door saw this and told her husband, "Honey, look at that. They surely don't know how to wash their clothes. Someone has to show them how." But the husband did not say anything.

This went on for a month, and the wife kept telling her husband the same line over and over, but the husband just kept silent. Then one day, in her amazement, the wife called out for her husband. "Look, Honey, their sheets are whiter than ever. It looks like they have learned how to do it right." The husband replied, "Honey, I woke up early this morning and cleaned our windows!"

In the past five months of learning to minister to the inmates of Santa Clara County Main Jail and the Correctional Facility at Elmwood, two things I came to witness: one is the virtue of humility and experience the presence of Jesus Christ amongst these people.

I admit that when I first set my foot on the floors of these facilities, fear and prejudice clothed me. Fear because I am aware of what these people are capable of -- especially for the possibility that they can physically hurt me. Prejudice, because somehow deep inside me, my heart tells me that they deserve their ordeal because of their crimes. However, as time goes on, the fear and prejudice in me went away and was replaced by humility and compassion.

This turn of events was not caused by me, but was caused by inmates whom I found sincere and honest in the realization of their mistakes and struggling to get things straight in their lives. In other words, the inmates moved me to clean the window of my heart, not only to see their hearts, but to see my own heart, my own brokenness and lift it up to Jesus. Truly I tell you, there are more instances that the inmates brought Jesus to me than I brought Jesus to them. In doing so, my relationship with Christ has become deeper and more intimate, empowering me more and more to do every bit of his will for me and for others, especially to the inmates — to love them and treat them with understanding and compassion.

In the Gospel of Luke we heard Jesus forgiving the criminal who was crucified with him. This is the same calling that is given to us by Jesus: to see these people in the same way he saw them through his own eyes, even how much they have sinned against society, and against other people. These people lived most of their lives where genuine love, care, and compassion is only but a fool's dream. No one is even calling them by their name the way Jesus calls us by our name. And this is our mission, our response to Christ's calling in ministering to them, that love, care, and compassion does exist and is waiting for them. And it is we who will lead and guide them there, granting that we too have witnessed the love, care, and compassion of Christ, so that we will not lead them blindly.



Angelo David a seminarian at St. Patrick's Seminary and CIC intern

Therefore my friends we should not be afraid to continue in pursuing the goodness that resides in the hearts of the inmates. Indeed there is goodness in them. But we are to dig very deep to find it, and do it with, love, care, and compassion just as Jesus gave love, care, and compassion to that one criminal who was crucified with him. Just as he gave love, care, and compassion to each and everyone of us. We, to whom he said, "Come and follow me."

CIC offers training

The next jail ministry training course, for both new and veteran volunteers is Sunday, 5/23/10 at Gateway City Church, 5883 Eden Park Place, SJ. 1:30 pm.

LOIS, continued from page 4

and to the women they serve.

"Our friendship goes back to the Gideons. My husband and I joined in 2000. She was a speaker, talking about the jail ministry," said Bonnie Birge. "I was so inspired.

"I remember calling ... it took me a while to get up the courage," she said. But she went to a CIC training and then Lois trained her on site. "She taught me so much. How to do a Bible study. How to work with the women ... the ins and outs of Elmwood."

Jodie Wiepking said she finally found the courage to volunteer with the women and went to jail with Lois, where she learned what could go wrong.

Lois had given out a few pencils and some were a little longer than others. A lockdown was instituted right in the middle of class, and Lois told one of the officers that a pencil was missing. He didn't think it was problem, but another officer was upset and called for a shakedown.

"The new week, the female

inmate (who had the pencil) came in and apologized. 'I was in the bathroom,' she said.

But it kept a conversation going between Lois and the officers. "That officer later kept asking me, 'You don't have any pencils, do you?'"

Jill, another volunteer trained by Lois, noted that over the years Lois has seen mothers and daughters together, and she has learned how to handle the bickering that can go on when people are incarcerated.

"Lois is sitting at the table, calm as can be," Jill said. Then she speaks and the women settle down.

Mary Lou Favela said Lois has been a blessing with the women and the volunteers. "It's very true," she said. "The women love you."

And after all these years, the women do love Lois.

"One of the sweetest comments I have heard is we were talking about children," Jill said, "and one of the women in the Bible study said, 'We're your children.'"

Thanks to Betty Gott - graphics and web designer - for her expertise in designing our newsletter banner and website.

www.GottDesign.net

Volunteers bring communion to Main Jail

By REV. EVELYN VIGIL
Main Jail Chaplain

Entering a correctional center, such as the Main Jail, takes a certain amount of courage, and a certain devotion to the words of Jesus, who calls us to visit Him in prison.

And this is never more true than at Easter, the day of Resurrection, hope and new life.

Volunteers from the broad spectrum of Christian churches join every year at Easter to ensure that the men receive the Body of Christ and a few moments of prayer, even as they are locked away from family and friends.

This year, as always, volunteers who came together as strangers departed as friends and companions on the road of Christian faith and life. Teams of twos and threes were assigned particular areas to serve, and their presence served as the Christian fellowship needed when the Body of Christ comes together to celebrate the Risen Christ and to preach the Good News of God's love for all.

At the Last Supper, Jesus blessed the cup and said it was the blood of the new covenant poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. Nothing hidden, nothing secret, but new life and spiritual nourishment for those who dare to gather around the table.

And new life in the Spirit for those who carry the Good News, remembering Paul's words in 1 Corinthians: "When I came to you, brothers and sisters, I did not come proclaiming the mystery of God to you in lofty words or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified."

The words the men longed to hear: "Christ has died, Christ has risen. Alleluia!"

Can we EMAIL our newsletter to you?

Email us at **CICMIN@AOL.COM** if we can send you this newsletter by email. Donations can still be mailed or done online. Thanks for helping us to save resources.

Inspired by the Spirit to give

In Paul's letter to the Corinthians he writes "Now you together are Christ's body, but each of you is a different part." We come from many congregations and yet we are one community unified by the Spirit with a specific Call to love the prisoners. Even though the youth in Juvenile Hall and the Ranches, and the men and the women in the Department of Corrections are separated from the general community by walls of concrete and steel, they are still part of us, still part of the fellowship, still part of the Body of Christ. As Paul says again "If one part is hurt, all parts hurt with it." Any of us who have been Inside know the levels of pain that people are living with due to the harm they have inflicted on others or on themselves. This affects all of us, and so inspires us to reach out and participate in the blessings of healing for the prisoners, the victims of crime and our whole community. We go inside to teach about forgiveness, to show people they are loved by God and that hope is possible. There is new life for all of us. We promote reconciliation with God, family and the community as a whole body.

There are more than 5,000 people in custody at any given time in our community. This broken part of the Body of Christ cannot be ignored or denied. More than 400 people, mostly lay folks, respond to Jesus' call each week to be with the inmates and youth. Hundreds of others respond to the Call by supporting CIC Ministries through financial gifts and offerings of prayer. Through your generosity and faithfulness we make a difference in thousands of lives - from the inmates themselves, to their families, to the volunteers' growth in faith, to the congregations and our wider community.

We need your support, especially in these economically difficult days, where the desperation levels are even higher. Through your support we are beginning a new in-depth outreach to the youth as well as starting to develop a program of resource referrals to help integrate prisoners back into the community. There is much we can do, inspired by the Spirit and empowered by your involvement to heal our whole body.

COMMUNITY, Continued from page 3

She replies, "yes." I tell them that I will be outside the room if needed. The ladies talk with her for 15 minutes until she is comfortable enough to return to her pod.

This Bible study is indeed a community affair where everyone present was invited and encouraged to participate. We all freely and willingly shared our gifts in order to make our time together in sacred space truly a communal experience in a radically new way as only Jesus could have envisioned - young, old, lay, ordained, staff, volunteer, Latino, African-American, Caucasian, females and a male all participated. It is good to see the village/community taking collective responsibility in raising the children and the children contributing through their participation in helping to raise the village/community to a higher level through collective worship.

Community is not only in our new volunteers' church's name, it is also in the spirit and hearts of its members.

HOW FAR DOES MY DONATION GO IN JAIL?

- * \$2.50 - one NIV paperback full Bible
- * \$26 - a case of 12 Bibles
- * \$35- 12 Spanish full Bibles
- * \$42- 12 Free on the Inside Bibles - a special Bible with testimonies and help for prisoners.
- * \$47.50 - 50 NIV New Testaments.
- * \$24 - 24 grief pamphlets (Deeper Still)
- * \$7.00 -a NIV Large-Print Softcover Bible
- * \$14- a Heart and Soul workbook for a young woman under 25.
- * \$104- 16 Large-Print NIV Softcover Bibles

CIC MINISTRIES
Correctional Institutions Chaplaincy of Santa Clara County, Inc.
P.O. Box 360068
Milpitas, CA 95036-0068

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Milpitas, CA
Permit No. 19

What are you doing?

If your church is involved in outreach to the local community, particularly to groups on the margin, please let us know.

As county resources have started to dry up, folks leaving jail are looking for places to find food, shelter, and hope. If they're not on the streets, then their families might be.

Please give us an idea of what your church is offering, no matter how small it might seem to you. We would love to compile a list of possibilities for men, women and children coming out from incarceration to the bright light of day.

Donate Online
Donations can be made online at
WWW.CICMINISTRIES.ORG.
CIC ministries is a not-for-profit
(501c3) ministry.
Your donations are tax-deductible.

CIC BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Bruce Friesen - Chair
Chris Christensen - Vice Chair
Jim Ritari - Treasurer
Jennifer Lathrop - Secretary
Rev. Wayne Evans
William Gott
Penny Hogg, Ph.D
Robb Kundtz
Rev. Kenneth Love
Ronnie Phiher
Joan Robinson
Rev. Silvestre Romero

CHAPLAINCY STAFF

Rev. David Robinson - Executive Director, Elmwood Men's Facility
(408) 957-5853
EMAIL: 1CICDIRECTR1@SBCGLOBAL.NET
Rev. Evelyn Vigil - Main Jail
(408) 299-2309
EMAIL: MAINJAILREV@AOL.COM
Rev. Louann Roberts - Elmwood Women's Facility
(408) 957-5822
EMAIL: CCWREV@AOL.COM
Rev. Ra Amen - Elmwood, Juvenile Hall
(408) 278-5868
EMAIL: CICCHAPLAIN@ATT.NET
Website: www.cicministries.org