

❖ PMA NEWSLETTER ❖

Volume 8 Issue 2

SEPTEMBER 2002

COUNTING THE COSTS

INVOICE

Prison Mission Association
PO Box 2300
Port Orchard, WA 98366

Billed to:

The State of Washington
Statehouse
Olympia, WA

Details

Reimbursement for public funds not spent for the arrest, prosecution, and incarceration of a repeat offender whose life was transformed through a relationship with Jesus Christ.	\$50,000.00
Sales tax 6%	3,000.00
Total Due	<u>\$53,000.00</u>

Please remit within 30 days of receipt of this invoice.

The mock invoice above is meant to humorously, but graphically illustrate the reality that there are very tangible benefits to society as a whole when even one individual encounters and responds to the life changing gospel of the Savior.

If PMA could send out bills such as this we would literally have more money than we would know what to do with. In reality, however, PMA has no more right to take credit for a life changed by the gospel than the mail carrier that delivers the envelope can take credit for your income tax refund check. Our correspondence lessons, literature distribution, visitation and other ministries are only vehicles which God uses to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ. The power of

transformation is not in the messenger but in the message. This truth is clear from the words of Paul in Romans 1:16, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first and also to the Greek."

Another reality is that it costs money to carry out the work of delivering the message of salvation to prisoners and others around the world that are studying God's Word through Bible Correspondence Fellowship. This ministry is made possible through the generous donations of churches and individuals that share in the burden of bringing the gospel of God's grace to a world in tremendous need of that transforming power.

FROM THE DESK OF THE DIRECTOR



I have been serving as the director of Prison Mission Association for nearly a full year. I have had opportunities now to be involved in every aspect of the ministry and I have gained an appreciation for each facet of the work we do. Every particular ministry of PMA has a unique role in accomplishing our stated vision of "Reaching Prisoners for Christ." Bible Correspondence Fellowship, Bible and literature distribution, in-prison Bible studies and services, pen pals, evangelistic meetings and other forms of outreach all play a vital part in presenting the gospel of God's Grace to inmates and training them to understand God's will and to live it out in their daily lives.

In July, I had the privilege of coordinating the annual revival meetings at the Washington Corrections Center (WCC) in Shelton. This was a unique experience because of the size of the event and the need to organize so many various individuals and groups throughout the facility. Please take some time to read the encouraging report of how God used the WCC

revival for His honor and glory.

I want to say a few brief words about the ministry in Cameroon, West Africa which was left when Brother Lawrence Asong was tragically killed last February. First, PMA wishes to thank all that generously contributed to the memorial fund established for Lawrence's wife, Mizpah, and the younger children. We received over \$3,000 which will be given to the family after the end of September when we will no longer be accepting gifts for this fund.

I and another PMA board member hope to make a trip to Cameroon in November to assess the condition of the ministry. I have spoken several times to Lawrence's eldest son, Christian, and he assures me that the ministry continues but it has taken a serious blow by the untimely death of his father. A more complete report will be forthcoming after my return from the trip in November. Please be in prayer for this important fact finding trip. The Lord's people have made tremendous investments of time, energy and finances in the ministry in Cameroon over more than 30 years. We hope to be able to return with a definite plan as to how to keep the work functioning and growing.

I hope you will enjoy reading this edition of the **PMA Newsletter** and rejoice with us in how the Lord is using the ministry of Prison Mission Association to grow and develop His Church, the Body of Christ.

Dm

New Practical Bible Studies Available

Prison Mission Association has recently completed a new set of 26 Bible studies that respond to some of the most common questions we receive from our correspondence students. We call this series **Essential Bible Studies**. These are concise, one page answers that are meant to provide a basic understanding of a variety of common issues that often cause confusion and concern for new believers. Some of the issues dealt with in the studies are assurance of salvation, water baptism, speaking in tongues, eternal security, anger, temptation, divorce, homosexuality, the occult and more.

These very practical studies have applications in many other settings beside just the PMA Bible Correspondence lessons. These can be used by youth workers, Bible study or Sunday School teachers, discussion leaders or for discipling new believers. All of these lessons are included on the PMA Information CD which also includes the entire set of BCF lessons. If you would like a copy of the CD just let us know in the PMA office. You may also download the lessons from our website. Simply go to www.pmabcf.org and click on Download Lessons and follow the links to the **Essential Bible Studies**. Our prayer is that these lessons will be valuable to believers everywhere and we want to make them as readily available as possible.

Yes, I Will Help!

I want to accept the challenge of helping PMA.

\$100.00

\$50.00

\$15.00

Monthly

\$75.00

\$25.00

Other _____

One Time Only

General Fund

Don Sommer's Support

Mini-Library Fund

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

PRISON ECHOES.....

I would just like to thank you for making these lessons available to all who are currently incarcerated. I look forward to growing in faith through the application of the principles I learn in God's Word. I ask that you pray for me since I expect many trials in the days ahead.

-M.M.

I just want to thank you all for taking the time to help me in my understanding of God's Word. You are doing a great thing! God bless. Your Brother

Pray that I will keep my faith and stay strong in my walk with the Lord. And that His will be done in my life and not my own.

-C.K.

Thank you for making such an impact on my son when the mission group went to the Shelton prison in July. He really wants to know God more in his life. I would like the bible course so I could do it while he does it also. Thank you. In His Grace.

-P.T.

I am honored to be able to do these Bible correspondence lessons. I am learning a lot. I want to walk with the Lord. I have been messing up lately and I am changing my ways. I want to be good. I want to stay in the Word. Too many times, I have given into temptation. I would steal, cheat, swear and lie. I am going to be a better person with His help. I will stay in the Word.

-N.R.

I would like to thank you very, very much for this Bible study course. I love learning more about God and Jesus Christ. The more I read the more I understand and love it. And the more I read it the more I put it to work in my life. When I get out I want nothing to do with my old ways, I mean this. I just wish I would have followed Lord Jesus a long time ago. Being in here scares me. I need the Lord more than I have ever needed anything in my life. I pray the Lord will show me my ways around inside and out. Thank you for being so kind. God bless you.

-M.W.

I am just starting my walk with the Lord. This lesson is helping me learn the Word and the Bible better. I would like to keep taking your lessons to learn more about the Lord. I asked the Lord to be my personal Savior. And when I did, it was so awesome! Thank you for letting me take your lessons and I will be waiting for the next one. S.B.

I would like to thank you for these studies. I am looking so forward to fellowshiping and growing in Christ. I've spent my past two years studying and my relationship with the Lord has been so wonderful. There have been plenty of purging but it is necessary for maturity. I really know God's unconditional love and acceptance of me has helped me more than anything. Today I'm seeing myself more and more like God does because I'm in Christ. I've been through so much, but, today I know God's grace is sufficient and He's in control. I have three years left and look forward to it. This is precious time for me. Thanks again for providing these lessons.

-J.B.

From The Desk of Mike Dale, Chaplain at Walworth County Jail in Wisconsin:

Praise God for your ministry! I'm a chaplain at Walworth County Jail in Wisconsin. I've been ministering in this jail for over 20 years. About five weeks ago I stumbled across your website. What a blessing to see and use the Bible Correspondence Lessons. Because we have over 360 inmates, soon to be 500 (new building plans), it is hard to find Bible studies that we can use here because of staples in the books. So it has been easy to reproduce these studies and hand them out. I have recruited a grader to help and have started using your lessons for those who can't get enough of God's Word. The inmates are very excited to be able to study on their own. Thank you for giving me another way of spreading the Gospel. If you have anything else that would help me here in jail please email me. In Christ Jesus, Chaplain Dale. PS: We are always looking for a low cost way to supply inmates with religious materials and Bibles.



Pen Pals Needed (Desperately)

I recently learned that 70% of prison inmates receive no mail from friends and family while they are incarcerated. One of PMA's ministries is to provide pen pals for prisoners. Through this program PMA seeks to connect inmates with mature Christians on the outside that can offer words of advice and encouragement. This is a simple way for a Christian to have an impact on the life of someone that may have no one else to offer kind and uplifting words. We have all letters sent through our PO Box in Port Orchard and we only match pen pals of the same sex to avoid any unwanted problems. We allow only first names to be used and the inmate never knows the address of the pen pal.

Currently our requests from inmates for pen pals far outnumber those that are willing to write, particularly among the male inmates. At this point the need for volunteers is so great that, if we do not get some more mature Christians willing to participate, we will need to discontinue our offers to inmates to help make that connection. This is a plea for help to anyone who feels a burden to help bring a spark of hope and joy to a forgotten individual behind bars. A volunteer need not commit to writing long detailed letters, just simple words of news and encouragement will be fine. Please contact the PMA office if you feel the Lord is burdening you to be a pen pal and we will provide you with an orientation packet to help you decide if this ministry is for you.

Thanks for the Literature

In the last PMA Newsletter we made a request for devotionals, bulletin inserts and other appropriate Christian literature that might otherwise be thrown away. We are able to include these things in our mailings to inmates along with their lessons. Several churches and individuals responded and we wish to thank you for your help. Keep it coming as we always have a need for this material.



GOD'S PERSPECTIVE

This is the third in a series that examines references to prisons and prisoners in the Bible. This time we will look at Samson whose life we can read about in Judges 13-16.

Samson is a tragic figure in the scriptures. His birth was the result of a special promise from God to his previously childless parents, Manoah and his wife. They were told before Samson's birth that he would be a unique individual, set apart for God to be an instrument to deliver His people, Israel, from the oppression of the Philistines. Likewise his life was to be characterized by certain restrictions, identifying him as a very exceptional person. This information was made known to the child's parents directly from the angel of the Lord, a pre-incarnate appearance of the Son of God.

*And the angel of the LORD appeared unto the woman, and said unto her, Behold now, thou art barren, and bearest not: but thou shalt conceive, and bear a son.
Now therefore beware, I pray thee, and drink not wine nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean thing:
For, lo, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and no razor shall come on his head: for the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb: and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.
Judges 13:3-5*

Manoah and his wife took these instructions very seriously and both were filled with awe at the thought of the tremendous responsibility that had been given to them. There is no indication in the scriptures that Samson's parents were delinquent in the way in which they raised him. Despite having God-fearing parents, being favored by the Lord and being gifted with super human strength, Samson still managed to mess up his life through poor choices, being controlled by his passions and simple stupidity. It is a story that is sadly often repeated today. So many of the souls trapped in the jails and prisons of our country are there because they simply made dumb decisions in life that led them in the wrong direction.

Despite so many unwise actions the Lord continued to use Samson as a tool to accomplish His purpose of bringing judgment on the Philistines, Israel's mortal enemies. Even his self-destructive attraction to Philistine women turned out to fit into the Lord's greater purpose.

*And Samson went down to Timnath, and saw a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines.
And he came up, and told his father and his mother, and said, I have seen a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines: now therefore get her for me to wife.
Then his father and his mother said unto him, Is there never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren, or among all my people, that thou goest to take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines? And Samson said unto his father, Get her for me; for she pleaseth me well.
But his father and his mother knew not that it was of the LORD, that he sought an occasion against the Philistines: for at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel. Judges 14:1-4.*

Ultimately, Samson's misadventures landed him in a Philistine prison. It was here that God finally accomplished the ultimate fulfillment of the promise given to Samson's parents before his birth. After having his eyes gouged out, he was put on display as a freak show for his captor nation's rulers and dignitaries. With the most influential people among the Philistines present Samson brought down the temple of the pagan god, killing himself and three thousand of Israel's oppressors.

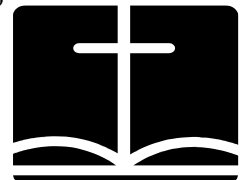
Had Samson had better judgment, he would have probably died at an old age as a honored and respected warrior that conquered the Philistines on the field of battle. Instead he died a violent and ignoble death as a humiliated prisoner and side show entertainer for the enemy. Samson could not escape the consequences of his poor behavior. Nonetheless, Samson's inability to make wise choices could not thwart God's intention to use him as a means to accomplish His greater purpose for Israel. It is a lesson for all of us that God can take even our foolishness and use it for His glory.

NEW OFFICE FACILITY FOR PMA

After occupying the same rented office space for eight years in a commercial building in downtown Port Orchard, our facilities have been moved. Grace Bible Church of Port Orchard has a house on its property which was used as a parsonage. The house has become vacant and PMA and GBC reached an agreement in which we provide the church with a donation to cover costs of upkeep and other expenses in exchange for our use of the entire house for our offices. The monthly donation is less than the rent we paid on the previously building and thus saves PMA money each month.

There are a number of advantages to this new arrangement. The old office building shared a parking lot with several other businesses and there was a serious shortage of parking spaces for our volunteers on certain days. Now we have the entire church parking lot at our disposal. The old building was on the second floor and many of our older volunteers had a hard time climbing the long staircase to reach the office. The church house is on one floor and very accessible for anyone to enter. Being closer to the church that most of our volunteers attend, we believe we can increase our visibility with the church members and encourage more volunteers to help our ever growing need for lesson correctors. We also will be able to share the high speed internet connection with the church and thus our office will function more efficiently. By the same token we will share the fax of the church and we have been able to save the monthly cost of a second telephone line (note PMA's new fax number is now 360-876-9579). Karen is especially pleased because now she can go out to lunch everyday with the church's pastor (who happens to be her husband).

If you are ever in Port Orchard and visit Grace Bible Church be sure to take a walk across the parking lot and stop in to say "Hi" to the folks at PMA.



Prayer & Praise

Praise— For the dedicated supporters of this ministry who continue to be so faithful in their affection for the Lord’s work that we share.

Praise—For the many volunteers who continue to dedicate their time and talents to this ministry effort.

Prayer— For the correct review and correction of the growing number of Bible lessons that we do.

Prayer— That our efforts to expand our Bible study ministry will be blessed and reflect our Lord’s will.

Prayer— That our lessons continue to inspire and bless our students, encouraging them to lead Spirit filled Christian lives.

Prayer— For our Director’s efforts to work with prisoners and to bring our Lord’s Word to our brothers.

Praise — For the successful move to our new offices and the volunteers who helped make the move happen.

Prayer— For the PMA Board as they make important decisions.

Prayer— For our Nation’s leaders and the leaders of other countries that they will make good decisions.



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KAREN’S KORNER

It is fall again and most of us are busier this time of year than any other time. I know that is true for me too. Not that things slowed down much during the summer. July 3 – 6 Cal and I and a group from the church in Port Orchard attended the GGF Summer Family Conference in Keystone, CO. Right afterward we spent a delightful morning talking with Dr. David Noebel and touring The Summit in Manitou Springs. Then we toured the Navigators Headquarters and Focus on the Family Headquarters in Colorado Springs. We got home in time to finalize the plans for the Shelton Revival on July 19th and 20th. The next week we moved our office (see Don’s article). Within a week we were running full speed at our new location.

Then there are my “other” ministries. This fall I am teaching a women’s Sunday School class on “Women Friendships,” teaching three Awana leadership conferences in western Washington, speaking about PMA to a ladies group from a Gig Harbor, WA church, and Cal and I are teaching two(!) marriages classes. I fill in the gaps with being the Awana Cubbies director and teaching Children’s Church. If your cup is full, I know how you feel!

There is no secret to “keeping busy.” The secret comes in learning to keep focused on what is really important. Every time I hear the story of Mary and Martha I feel conviction. I don’t want to be like Martha, whom the Lord rebuked for being so busy she missed what was really important. What is important? My relationship with God and people.



People is what PMA is all about. People, many incarcerated in institutions in America and around the world, need to hear about the transforming power of God through Christ Jesus. People that society has rejected and locked out of sight, so to be out of mind.

One such person is Celadonio DeJesus. Mr. DeJesus was awaiting trial on charges of rape in Johnson County Jail in Franklin, Ind. Don Sommer picked up a letter from Mr. DeJesus while at the office here in Port Orchard. Mr. DeJesus claimed to be innocent (don’t they all?). Yet, Don visited him and after listening to his story, was convinced that he was innocent. Then Don, along with the prison chaplain and a handful of others began working to clear Mr. DeJesus’ name. After nine months in prison, Mr. DeJesus was cleared of the charges and released.

This is not a regular part of the ministry of PMA. Usually we think in terms of numbers of prisoners receiving our correspondence courses. Yet here was one person whose life was changed forever by Don’s caring for him. *“Lord, in all my busyness, help me to remember what is really important. Help me to make a difference in life of someone today.”*

By God’s Grace,

Karen





Prison Mission Association
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THE LORD BLESSES REVIVAL 2002 AT SHELTON

On July 19-20, 2002, Prison Mission Association sponsored annual revival meetings at the Washington Corrections Center in Shelton, WA. The Lord blessed these meetings tremendously. There were an estimated 1500 inmates that attended at least one of the several events that took place that weekend. At each event those in attendance had an opportunity to hear and respond to the gospel of salvation. Five hundred eight individuals turned in response cards. Of that number there were 152 that indicated they trusted Christ for the first time, 263 made commitments to the Lord, 271 requested chaplain visits and 442 enrolled in PMA Bible Correspondence Lessons. We were somewhat taken by surprise by the last figure, as we prepared only 250 lesson packets to be distributed at the event. We had to prepare the rest after the event and have them delivered by the Chaplain's office.

Evangelist Lee Homoki was our special guest for this event. He spoke to one group of inmates on Friday night. Lee's opportunity to give an altar call was cut short by the corrections officers, however, because of the additional time required for the inmates' roll call due to the special event. Yet he was able to give a crystal clear explanation of the gospel which set the stage for events that followed the next day. Lee was also able to do a

demonstration of the cowboy's "tricks of the trade" with whips and ropes in the prison yard on Saturday. The response from the men to this was very enthusiastic.

Other participants included the **Freedom Team** from Bend, Oregon. They are an evangelistic team that performs demonstrations of remarkable strength such as breaking stacks of bricks, bending metal bars and ripping thick telephone books. The **Morning Light Band** from Kenmore, WA performed Friday night. The members of this group are recovering alcoholics and drug addicts with a powerful testimony of God's deliverance from substance abuse. Several other praise bands, more than 30 volunteers and the prison's chaplain staff all worked together marvelously to help make the event a complete success.

PMA wishes to extend our appreciation to those who prayed and sent special gifts for Revival 2002. You all helped make it possible.