

# ***Kelly Temple Prison Ministry Newsletter***

## **Feature: Riker's Island Hope Festival – July 8, 9 and 10<sup>th</sup> 2008**

Bishop James H. Gaylord-Pastor

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Director, Church Ministries  
Min. Craig M. Greene-Coordinator

**T**he  
month  
of  
July proved  
to be  
powerful.



Members of  
the Kelly Temple Prison ministry accompanied  
the ministry movement to Rikers Island to sing,  
worship and share with men and women who  
have taken a wrong path in life.

Minister Greene, Coordinator of the Kelly  
Temple Prison Ministry, encourages and  
invites all who are interested to go out and  
minister to the inmates. You do not have to be a  
member of the prison ministry to go out and  
minister. Please see our secretary Kathy Doctor  
or any one in the ministry if you have any  
questions.

## **Member Reflections of the Hope Festival:**

### **Evangelist Phyllis Bedner:**

“I was in prison and you came unto me.” This part of scripture, Matthew 25:36, brings home the point of how important it is to visit those who are in prison because it is likened to visiting Jesus himself.

On Wednesday July 9<sup>th</sup> Sister Monique and I were a part of the Hope Festival, two evangelical outdoor services sponsored by Prison Fellowship held at the Women’s Facility at Riker’s Island. There were about 58 workers from various churches across the NY area that had the same heart -- to share the love of Jesus.

Upon entering the check point area and going through the metal detectors and by the correction officers holding the hand-held devices, one couldn’t help but wonder, “Who were these women?” and what would be their response? After all, they are criminals locked behind these ominous bars and doors. What will we say to them? We are going to meet one on one with them. What could we have in common? All questions going through my mind were gone as soon as the first woman I met began to tell her story, tears immediately rolling down her face. It was important to listen because she was, in fact, repenting for the situation that brought her to Rikers Island and it became apparent to me that but for the grace of God there goes I. This is a soul.

The next phase of the Hope Festival was the actual service which was opened up with singing and followed with the preached word by Maria Durso, who gave her testimony of

being abused and living a life in the streets as a prostitute. It was very befitting that her text was about the woman caught in the act of adultery which tells the story of Jesus' love and compassion as He loosed this woman from out of the hands of her accusers and death. When the invitation to accept Jesus as Lord and Savior was given, many responded. This was what the Hope Festival was all about!

What a great experience it was to participate in this ministry. We thought that we were there to minister to female inmates but in return, through and by the Holy Spirit, we were ministered to. Jesus' presence was great and there was a feeling of fulfillment. It was quite clear that upon leaving we were not the same as when we had first entered through the prison doors.

Yes, the scripture manifested itself and became a reality, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren; ye have done it unto me. Jesus truly met us there!

### **Minister Craig Greene:**

We, your brothers and sisters at Kelly Temple, ministered to women and teenage boys that have been incarcerated at the Riker's Island jail. I would like to share with you some of my experiences of that day. Deaconess Kathy Mays, Brother Rudy Davenport and I had the opportunity to minister along with the other teams to approximately 100 teenage boys -- some waiting for trial and others serving out their sentences. It was heartbreaking to see so many boys locked up at one time in one place. The program was held on an outdoor athletic field. I could not help but reflect on my teenage years on an athletic field. I can remember my football practices, coaches yelling at me to run faster, hit harder, maintain my position and to run extra laps on the track (because I couldn't stop joking and laughing with teammates). I can remember teammates and friends cheering me on, regardless of the score. We laughed, joked and yes even cried (mostly tears from our laughter). It was all just apart of growing up and all of those days are somehow now fondly remembered; however, at the time they were exhausting and painful to experience.

So now, I stood on this football field watching teenage boys carrying chairs as they came out from behind the bars of the jail through a gymnasium that needs a great deal of repairs and onto a football field - each and every move dictated by correctional officers. The stands were empty -- no fans to cheers for these teenage boys. In fact the only thing that I could see similar to my teenage years in comparison to these boys was the home team uniform I wore - a red and white uniform in high school and their uniform, a white t-shirt, work pants and orange sneakers. The absence of laughter and youthful exuberance was notable.

However, the advantage for these teenage boys was that this was the Hope Festival and we had come to lift up the name of Jesus. We had the chance (and we took it) to share the Gospel of Jesus. We shared with teenage boys that have in most cases never stepped into a church. The boys had the opportunity to hear from men that have been down the very same road that they are going and how meeting Jesus on that road changed

everything for the better. We talked, preached, prayed and even had the opportunity to laugh with some of these very young teenagers-soon to be men. I remember speaking with one young man that just could not get over the fact that he was outside in the sunshine after three months of incarceration. He said he never wants to go back to jail. He wanted to do what he needed to do to make things right. He did not want to hurt his aunt anymore than he already has (he calls his aunt his mother; his aunt has had him since he was about three years old). He said he never wants to hurt her like this again because she gave so much of her life for him. The day was filled with testimonies just like this from these teenagers. We had two sessions that day and at each altar call almost 100% of the teenage boys gave their hearts to the Lord Jesus Christ!

### **Brother Rudolph Davenport:**

At the Hope Festival, the Prison Ministry of Kelly Temple met with several other Prison Ministries at Riker's Island. After arriving, we went into prayer for souls to be saved and for a day of blessing. We ministered to two groups, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. There were testimonies given by two brothers from the group that were very powerful. As they came and we began to minister to them, there were so many willing to hear what the Lord was saying. At altar call, there were so many willing to step up and receive Christ as their Savior. As the day was closing, one inmate came to me and asked for prayer. I asked him what did he want to pray for? He said for strength and that God would keep him. I asked him did he truly believe and his answer was yes, tears in his eyes. After prayer, I told him to read his bible daily and to stay on his knees. I tell you I thank God for this Festival and that I was a part of it. It was a blessed day and God did just what he wanted to.

### **Sis Monique Johnson:**

I've always wanted to be a part of the prison ministry. On July 8<sup>th</sup> I finally got the opportunity to spread the good news to the women at Riker's Island. The good news that Jesus loves us, Jesus forgives us and Jesus saves. The women came with an ear to hear and hearts to receive a word from God. The Holy Spirit used us (Prison Ministry Volunteers) to minister to the lost souls. There must have been about 150- 200 inmates and 60 volunteers. We all shared through song and testimonies.

The blessing for me was when I saw women that were locked up with me in 1989 and were back in there. For so many women jail becomes a revolving door. God used me to show them He is no respecter of persons. If He saved me, He can save them. God is so awesome. All I want is to be used by God.

### **Deaconess Kathy Mays:**

It was a hot steamy day. The skies were bright blue and clear not a cloud to be seen. I was excited and filled with great expectation to attend my very first visit with the Kelly Temple Prison Ministry to the Hope Festival held at Riker's Island.

Minister Green informed us as to what to expect. We hung onto his every word, knowing in our hearts that this is what the Lord wants us to do. All I could hear ringing in my ear was the Lord's commandment, "When I was in jail did you visit me."

The anticipation of participating in this ministry came to life when we pulled into the Riker's Island parking lot. All the other ministerial staff was there dressed in bright blue tee shirts, ready to board the bus that would take us to Riker's Island. Some had traveled from as far away as Mississippi to be involved with the Hope Festival. What an exciting day!

When we arrived at the facility, we discovered that we would be ministering to children between the ages of 15 – 19. Needless to say my heart dropped! No sooner did we enter the building after going through the preliminaries a group of young adolescent boys in double file walked by. Someone shouted, "Let's pray for them." The correction officer asked them if they wanted to receive prayer. They stated, "Yes." We stretched out our hands and began to pray a corporate prayer, asking the Lord to protect them, keep their hearts and minds and make a way for them to come to Jesus! A calm atmosphere came over the hallway. Little did I know this was just the beginning!

We were led outside in the yard where there was a track and field for jogging. Some of the volunteers took advantage of walking the track. It may have been a way to release tension. I stood and observed everyone's actions.

Then it all began; we were told to minister to the young men individually and find out if they wanted to have follow-up bible study or information about bible school. There were about 60 – 75 young adolescent men who came in the field carrying their chairs. It was sad to see. I immediately began to think, "What if this was my child?" What could I say to him that would touch his heart? Would they have an ear to hear? I began to pray and asked the Lord to open up their ears, their hearts and their minds so they could receive what we had to say.

There were young men from every walk of life. The devil is not selective as to who was locked up behind the walls of Riker's Island. Some still had baby faces. When they smiled, their faces lit up. Some tried to play hard but you could see Jesus melting away that hardness when they heard the name of Jesus!

Several of the volunteers began to talk to the young men as to how they started life the same way: in and out of jail, selling drugs, robbing people, almost getting killed. It was a church service held in the back yard behind Riker's Island. One of the volunteers sang several songs to the glory of the Lord, which helped to set the tone for the presence of the Lord to appear in the young men's hearts!

Once we finished ministering to the young men there was an altar call. Out of the 60 – 75 inmates there were approximately 70 who came to the altar for prayer. It was an exciting time. When the a.m. session was over we were excited about their responses to the call of God. They were open and ready to be led. It was a very rewarding experience. I

wanted to break down and cry to see all these young children lining up and going back into that facility. It was heart-wrenching. I knew in my heart I had to stay strong, because I had to be ready for the afternoon session.

In the afternoon there were at least 100 young men who participated in the festival, having on a hard exterior but children on the inside. I know God answers prayer because their hearts melted like butter and they ran to the altar to say, “What must I do to be saved?”

It was sad yet rewarding! Would I do this again? Yes! Am I called to this ministry? I’m not sure, but what I do know is prayer changes things! I will be praying for our young people, asking the Lord to protect them and keep them in all His way and to stay in their hearts, their minds, their bodies and their souls in the precious name of Jesus!

### **Upcoming Events**

- Presentation on Mentoring Program – Date to be announced
- Angel Tree Program – December 2008

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