

Volunteer spotlight – the Van Zantens

by Denny and Arla Van Zanten

Editor's Note: Denny & Arla are not the only Van Zantens involved in prison ministry. Denny's uncle and aunt, John and Mary, are dedicated volunteers at Cornerstone Prison Church at the South Dakota State Penitentiary in Sioux Falls.

Arla and I have been volunteers for New Life Prison Community in Newton since Pastor Rick and Rose started the ministry in 2011. We signed up to volunteer hoping we could be a blessing to the men at the prison. Instead the men in prison have become a joy and blessing to us. From the very first Bible Study we attended, we were humbled by how many of the men have memorized scripture and were willing and able to share these verses during our studies. The men all have their own life stories,

and we feel privileged when they are willing to share them with us. They have experienced tough times, but it is wonderful and amazing to see how God is working in their lives. Like us, they know they are sinners but they are working hard at changing their lives. They're striving to become a shining light and a living testimony not only to their fellow inmates but also to the guards in the prison.

The Worship Services are also a highlight for us to attend. What a joy to greet and worship with 50 to 100 men who are very interested in learning more about God. We enjoy it when the men share poems or songs they've written about their personal journey with Christ. Witnessing the baptisms and professions of faith of so many men within the prison walls is also a

very touching experience. We are especially encouraged to see some of the men take on leadership roles, encouraging and mentoring others to come to know Christ. The Holy Spirit is definitely working within the Newton prison!

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Many of the men will be in prison for years to come, but some of them are being released. It's great to see them get out and become established in communities. It's wonderful that Pastor Rick is beginning a mentoring program for released prisoners in central Iowa in order to help them make a smooth transition into society.

Overall it's a privilege to be part of the New Life Prison Community and we would encourage others to join as well.



Denny and Arla Van Zanten at their daughter Jana's wedding in early June.

Be a light



by Rose Admiraal

As Christmas approaches and the year comes to an end, we give thanks for God's faithfulness to us and to New Life Prison Community. Recently, Pastor Rick preached about how we need to "walk in the light of the Lord" (Isaiah 2:5). Would you be willing to be a light for New Life by sending a year-end gift to help us continue our work within the prison walls? Our work inside the Newton Prison is God's light of life to these men. Help us continue to be God's light by giving to New Life. If you're inspired to give, please fill out the form below and send your donation today!

"The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned."
(Isaiah 9:2)



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Prayer corner

by Rose Admiraal

- Give thanks for the 15 men who were baptized and the 4 who professed their faith in 2013!
- Please pray for the men at Newton as they are apart from loved ones during the holidays.
- We give praise for answering Dean's prayer: his father-in-law Stan is recovering after a very serious car accident.
- Please pray for men who have left prison or will be leaving soon. May the Lord surround them with a Christian community to support them in their walk on the outside.
- Pray for healing and forgiveness as the men deal with broken relationships.
- Give thanks that Pete could finally hear from his mom after many months! Pray that many of the men will be able to communicate with loved ones during this Christmas season.

Would you like to pray for New Life's weekly needs as a prayer warrior? Contact Pastor Rick (pastorrick@newlife-prison.org) or Rose (rose@newlife-prison.org).

An attitude of gratitude by Pastor Rick

An attitude of gratitude. That was the theme of my Thanksgiving message on November 21 at the prison gym. After reading from Numbers 11, I called on the New Life prison congregation to learn from ancient Israel. Don't complain but go against the grain! Through the Holy Spirit, our hearts are becoming more grateful to God.



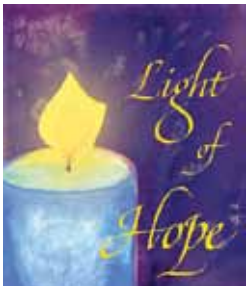
Baptism was the highlight of the service.

We're grateful to God for transformed lives. At the Thanksgiving service, four men were baptized. Matt, Shawn, Joshua, and Art gave thanks to God for giving them renewal in baptism. Matt had a bit of hesitation before I baptized him, but he received peace of mind when he looked over at two of New Life's volunteers: Phil Goodyk and Tiffany Gosselink. Joshua also received support from Jim Karr, a New Life volunteer who stood nearby to witness his baptism. When I asked the men what bap-

tism meant for their lives, they gave many answers: forgiveness of their past, a fresh start, and a new life in Jesus Christ. After the baptism, the praise team sang "Remind me who I am" by Jason Gray. Here are some of the lyrics: "When I can't receive Your love, afraid I'll never be enough. Remind me who I am, I'm the one You love that will be enough. I'm the one You love." Tiffany also sang a solo in Spanish: "Precioso Jesus." These translated words concluded her song: "I can't live without you by my side."

One of the praise team vocalists, Kevin Bolt, provided these reflections: "To witness the four baptisms, celebrate communion, and praise God in music with these men was a spiritually uplifting time." We also had three visitors. Playing the drums for the praise team, my son John came to the prison for the first time. Rev. Paul and Ellen Hoekstra were also at the service. The interim pastor at Calvary Christian Reformed Church in Pella, Pastor Paul, prayed and helped to serve communion. Pastor Paul had this to say: "Baptism with applause was the way it ought to be! Bob [one of New Life's inmate-members] did a fabulous job in his acappella solo of 'How Great Thou Art.' Celebrating communion face-to-face was also very meaningful." Our hearts overflow with thanksgiving for the great things God has given to us.

Groups meet weekly at the prison by Pastor Rick



New Life perseveres at the prison each week. Faithfully our volunteers enter the prison out of love for God and his incarcerated people. Tuesday afternoon's New Life in Prayer meets from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. A typical group meeting begins with fellowship, then moves on to singing of praise songs before going into a time of prayer and the study of God's Word. Recently we completed an eight-part DVD study from Peacemaker Ministries. They're committed to their mission: "Transforming relationships with the power of the Gospel." In December we'll prepare for Christmas by participating in an Advent series focused on the Light of Christ.

Thursday night's New Life in the Word also features dedicated volunteers who join the men at the prison. We're in the middle of an incredible DVD study entitled "Not a Fan" by Kyle Idleman. "Not a Fan" has brought record numbers to the Thursday night group. The first three sessions featured attendance numbers of 27, 37, and 32 men! Inmate-member Bill feels that this is a sign of the revival happening at the Newton Prison.

This study has encouraged the men to no longer be just fans but to truly become followers of Jesus Christ. At the core, the purpose of these sessions is to become a completely committed follower of Jesus. Often the emphasis in our group meetings is practical—God wants each one of us to live a life of faith. Tracy, an inmate-member, enjoys the "Not a Fan" study tremendously. He's been reading Kyle's book as we move through the study and he also invites others to attend so that they too may be blessed. One of the men in prison anonymously wrote these reflections about how we change: "We become followers by hearing and doing the Word of God. As we seek His Word, He captures our hearts, allowing us to receive his blessing."