



Isaiah 61:1 The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.

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Berean Banquet
September 11, 2015

ANNUAL BEREAN BANQUET UPDATE

The annual Berean Prison Ministries banquet is fast approaching and will be here in two short months. Each year we choose a feature guest speaker to share life experiences and the wisdom that they have gained from those experiences. For this year's Berean banquet (held this year on Friday, September 11, 2015 at Five Points in Washington), our guest speaker has a work history completely unique from any speaker we've previously featured.

This year we welcome Tim Goeglein (pictured) as our featured speaker for the banquet. Tim is currently Vice President of External Relations for Focus on the Family®, the former Special Assistant to former U.S. President George W. Bush, as well as the Deputy Director of the White House Office of Public Liaison from 2001 to 2008.

Tim will be sharing how he experienced forgiveness from the President of the United States and redemption following his resignation for plagiarizing columns written for his hometown newspaper, *The News-Sen-*

tinel in Fort Wayne, Indiana back in 2008.

Other speakers include ex-inmates speaking on the redemption and forgiveness they've encountered since they came in contact with Berean Prison Ministries and how their lives were changed for eternity during incarceration.



The Banquet includes a sit down dinner and is free to any who wish to attend. You can make your reservations by filling out and mailing the form at the end of this newsletter in the attached postage paid envelope, via email to Ken Helmuth at kdhelmuth@gmail.com, or by calling (309) 672-0091.

We thank you for all the support and prayers you have devoted to Berean Prison Ministries and continue to devote. Your prayers are always appreciated and needed. We look forward to seeing you on September 11th!

REDEMPTION IN ROMANIA

When Berean Ministries started working in Romania ten years ago no one could have predicted where the ministry would be today.

Ten years ago, several Berean Prison Ministries volunteers traveled to Miercurea Ciuc in the Transylvania area of Romania to meet with the Warden at a prison where Fedi Davidovics started holding religious services two years prior. Fedi and his family had been living in Romania to help with mission work for a year and during that time he had built relationships with the administration, guards, and inmates at the prison. After the meeting, the Berean delegation asked the Warden if a meeting could be arranged with the General Director in Bucharest, the man in charge of all the prisons in the country of Romania.

When the delegation met with the General Director they requested to be allowed to put volunteers in all of the Romanian prisons to hold religious services. Hesitant, the General Director's response was that he would have to think about it, but before it could even be a possibility approval from the governmental cabinet level minister above him would need to be given to the project. The delegation left the meeting with rejection weighing heavily on their hearts, having no doubt that the ministry in Romania would be over before it began.

Three days later, the Berean delegation got a call

from the General Director with the message that access would be given to Berean Prison Ministries to all of the Romanian prisons for volunteers to hold religious services. He sent over the agreement via courier to ensure the delegation had it before they left the country.

Ten years later, Berean Prison Ministries has approximately fifty christian men and women ministering in prisons housing 44% of the total inmates in Romania. The Almighty has clearly been present through every step of the process. Pray that God will send forth more workers, for the harvest is truly plentiful.

Levente Kovendi has been an immeasurable blessing to the ministry in Romania (pictured with his family on next page). He not only ministers in a number of prisons himself, but he also leads the prison ministry in Romania for Berean, locating other Christian men and women who have a heart to minister to those who are incarcerated and looking for the hope and freedom that only comes from knowing Jesus Christ.

The Berean delegation returned to Romania in May of this year, led by Fedi Davidovics. The first Saturday was spent worshipping with the prison volunteers and hearing





how God had been working in the prisons of Romania. The volunteers had many stories to share. One such story is that of the prison where Pastor Julian ministers.

Pastor Julian's church works with the prison administration, and one day per month they host a father/son program that brings the sons of inmates to the prison to spend the day with their fathers. On another day each month, the inmates come to his church and spend the day with their families, participating in activities and enjoying food provided by the church. According to Pastor Julian, not only do these activities help keep family intact during the father's incarceration, but hosting these events has been a tremendous blessing in the life of the church.

During the Saturday meeting, two ex-inmates told of how their lives had been impacted by the prison ministry. The first told of how he had reached the lowest point

in his life when he came to prison. His wife had just left him, he was incarcerated, and he felt he had nothing to live for. He intended to hang himself with his shoe laces when a cellmate encouraged the man to let him introduce him to someone who knew the Lord and could help him. The Berean volunteer he got to know shared with him the love and compassion of Jesus Christ. He became a believer and wants to be baptized [pictured].

The second inmate to speak on Saturday became a follower of Christ in 2013 while serving time at the Gerla prison. His goal is to some day be allowed to return to the prisons and share the freedom in Jesus he has found with the incarcerated men there. He requested prayer for his mother, who is currently not a believer.

Across eastern Europe gypsies (or the Roma people) have been flocking to the Lord. One Romani man, shared how a there were now four Bible teaching churches in his village with approximately 3,300 members after a great revival had taken place.

Berean has helped with the establishment and



PRAYER REQUESTS

The power of prayer is a remarkable thing and we see that power in work every day in the lives of those we minister to in prison and out. Here are some of our current prayer requests. Please join us in praying for the following:

- Additional volunteers to help in Peoria, IL with processing the thousands of requests for Bibles and Bible studies received each month.
- Praise for the many doors of ministry opportunities that God has opened for Berean and that we would not fail to meet any opportunity placed before us.

- Attendance at Berean's Annual Banquet on September 11.
- Praise for the funding that has allowed us to meet all of our past obligations, and prayers for additional contributions that we may be able to continue to meet current obligations.
- That each of the many volunteers in the U.S., Romania, and Russia would be faithful in their efforts to expand the Kingdom of God where they serve.

building of two churches in Romania and the delegation had an opportunity to visit both on Sunday. The church in Miercurea Ciuc was started when a young man became a follower of Christ while in prison and upon finishing his sentence he returned to his village and started a Bible study. Berean was able to partner with his village to raise money to purchase a building under construction. Currently, the work on the building continues.

This church is led by John, the leader of a large number of the Roma people. Please lift up your prayers for the leadership of this church, that God would raise up people who would be willing to work along side of John to lead this congregation of believers.

The second church is in Gheorgheni, Romania. Gheorgheni is a city of approximately 150,000 people with a community of about 400 Roma living on the edge of the city. Generally their homes have dirt floors, there is no sewer system, no electricity, and have one water faucet for the water needs of all 400 people. In spite of this, a large number have come to love God. Berean helped raise the balance needed to finish the construction of their church and hygiene house. Please pray for those in the village who have not made a commitment to Christ and for Past Zolt as he leads the church in Gheorgheni as well as a number of other churches in the area.

The remaining time was spent meeting with a prison Warden and the General Director and his staff in Bucharest. The goal of the delegation is not to personally minister in the prisons, but to keep the doors of the ministry open with government officials so that the nearly fifty volunteers are welcomed to the prisons. It is for this reason Berean Prison Ministries feels that it is necessary to send a small delegation to Romania each year to continue the wonderful work the Berean volunteers are doing.



FINANCIAL NEEDS

Over the past couple of years expenses have increased significantly for Berean Prison Ministries - for instance, postage costs have increased 2.5 times over the expense of the last year due to an increase in requests for Bibles and Bible Studies from inmates around the U.S. We have also added additional volunteers in Romania that we assist with gasoline or bus ticket costs incurred when traveling to and from the prisons.

All of the work done by Berean is conducted entirely by volunteers, except for one person, Levente, who works full-time in the Romanian prison ministry. He receives a small monthly stipend to help support his family and cover his costs of travel.

Please consider how you might partner with Berean Prison Ministries by making a regular monthly or one time contribution to help inmates in the U.S. and around the world find the freedom that only comes from a relationship with Jesus Christ. The Board of Directors is committed to being good stewards of the resources God has entrusted to our care and we thank you for your prayers and contributions.

“...I WAS IN PRISON,
AND YE CAME UNTO ME...
INASMUCH AS YE HAVE
DONE IT UNTO ONE OF
THE LEAST OF THESE MY
BREThEREN, YE HAVE
DONE IT UNTO ME.”

MATTHEW 25:36, 40

LOCAL MINISTRY UPDATE:

PEORIA CO. JAIL

Many years ago, Berean Prison Ministries began at the Peoria County Jail in Peoria, Illinois when brothers Paul and Ed Meister started holding services and ministering to inmates. Peoria Co. Jail was also where the Berean Bible distribution program began, which provides a free Bible to any inmate who requests one. Their efforts were blessed, and today services are being held in a number of jails and prisons in Illinois, Florida, Missouri, and the countries of Romania and Russia.

In the U.S. alone there are over 250 volunteers. A dedicated group of volunteers currently hold church services in the Jail gymnasium. They hold one service for women and two additional services for the men. For security, and other reasons, not all the inmates are allowed to attend the services. To reach inmates that can't attend the services, a group of volunteers goes to each of the pods that are not allowed to attend and conduct a Bible Study for the inmates.

In addition to the church services, several volunteers provide counseling services for the inmates during the week as described below by David Meister.

Friday morning counseling for the inmates started in 2004 when my Uncle Paul Meister asked a volunteer to come to the jail to meet with inmates who wanted a chance to talk about spiritual issues in a one-on-one setting. After a while several more men were added, including myself, ending with six men counselling inmates.

We have a routine that we go through every Friday morning, so a typical Friday starts with going over request forms, making a list of men requesting biblical counselling, and, most important, prayer for the men we're going to meet and prayer for the Holy Spirit to be present. As the men file into the Chaplain's office, we each select one man and meet one-on-one. Some men request prayer, while others have questions about their Bible studies, family situation, etc.

We meet with men who have never met God, oth-

ers who have grown up in church, but made the decision to run away for one reason or another. After an inmate is sentenced and has been taken to the Department of Corrections, Berean Prison Ministries will mail the inmates their Bible and Bible study lessons so they can further their studies while incarcerated.

We also perform baptism if the inmate has requested after sentencing. Our policy is for the inmate to meet with the chaplains to determine his understanding of baptism, how God has worked in his heart, and if he is 'walking the talk'. We take the process one step further by asking the jail administration for their permission to baptise and ask the officers who see their actions daily if there has been a life change. Since 2009, we have baptized 16 inmates and we look forward to seeing them again, either here or in the hereafter.

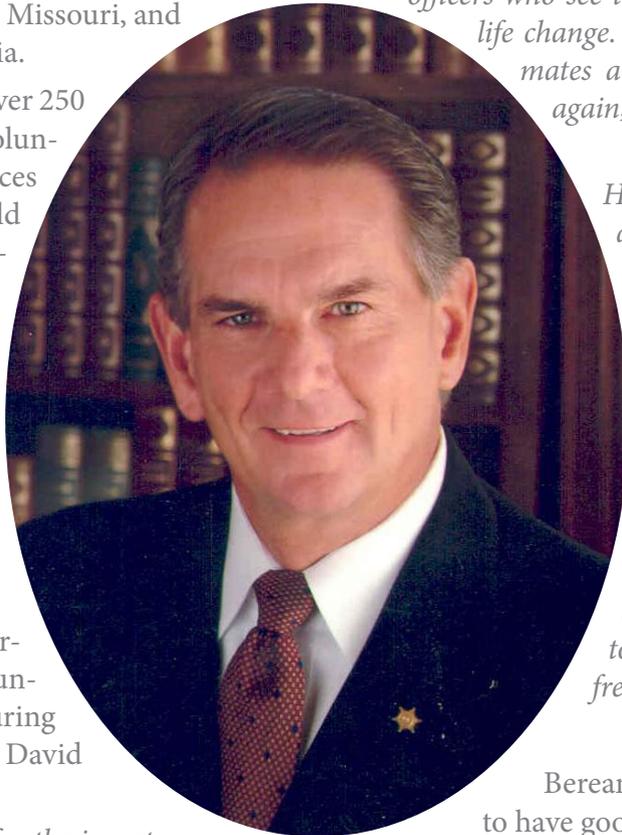
God continues to amaze me with His his unending capacity for love and compassion. He shows men and women incarcerated for bad choices they've made forgiveness and mercy and gives them a new lease on life - and eternity. I've been told, "I've tried it my way seven or eight times and it's gotten me the same result. I think I'll try it God's way." At that I say, "You've got nothing to lose and all to gain." Please pray for us as we work to lead men and women to Christ so they can know what true freedom is.

-Chaplain Skip Meister

Berean Prison Ministries has been blessed to have good relationships with the Sheriffs and staff at the facilities where we serve as evidenced by the following comments by Peoria County Sheriff, Mike McCoy (pictured):

Together with several friends, Ed and Paul Meister founded Berean Prison Ministries in 1984 and began work in the Peoria County Jail. This was an offshoot of the former Faith, Hope, and Love Ministry. The emphasis of Berean Prison Ministries was to serve the inmates in a manner that would help them identify with Christian principles while also attending to some of the needs that perhaps the Peoria County Sheriff's Office was unable to provide.

After the success was demonstrated at the Peoria County Jail and other local county jails, Berean Prison



Ministries made presentations to the State of Illinois. It is now operating in the State of Illinois prisons and correctional facilities.

This relationship has progressed into a worldwide program offering Bible study, death notifications, counseling, and various inmate services - all at no cost to the taxpayers of the community or the inmates. Berean is completely comprised of volunteers who work seven days a week at most institutions.

Berean took on the challenge of trying to convince the countries of Romania and Russia that having Christian services in the penal institutions would reap benefits. With the dedication of many volunteers and help of many politicians, the Berean Prison Ministries was finally granted permission to have a representative in Romania. That has flourished in several additional Romanian prisons.

I will say without hesitation, Berean Prison Ministries has had a very positive effect at the Peoria County Jail. I also know, because I traveled to Russia with Mayor Jim Ardis and a small delegation from Berean Prison Ministries, the impact on the Russian prisons is without equal.

We applaud and thank the men and women of Berean Prison Ministries for their dedication to seeing that Christianity is a focal point of all people...especially those who are incarcerated.

*-Michael McCoy
Sheriff, Peoria County, Illinois*

LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Berean Prison Ministries carries the message of the Bible to any inmate wanting to hear the word. The response we've gotten from inmates is one we could not have anticipated when Paul and Ed Meister first began Berean Prison Ministries. We distribute over 20,000 Bibles a year to prisoners in 47 states. We don't advertise, which means all the Bibles are being requested because the inmates that have received Bibles are sharing their stories with their fellow inmates.

A special testimony is that of Cristi Bourdoret, a volunteer in the Margieni Prison in Romania. His father left the family when he was a young boy and the whole family struggled with the loss and betrayal. At the age of seventeen, his older brother gave him a Bible and Cristi's life forever changed. Cristi told us, "my joy was great to get possession of this book."

He began to avoid ugly things he had done and sought to straighten out his life by himself. His neighbor told him he should repent to change his life. On May 1, 1986 Cristi surrendered his life to Jesus. Today Cristi happily serves God in the prison ministry in Romania.

We are thankful for the support we receive from many people like you we ask for your prayer support and financial help as God directs you.

Blessings,
Ken Hoerr

RESERVE YOUR SPOT AT THE BEREAN PRISON MINISTRIES BANQUET

Fill out and cut along the dotted lines and place in the addressed envelope to Berean Prison Ministries and send it our way!

NAME: _____

MAILING ADDRESS: _____

PHONE: _____

EMAIL: _____

NUMBER OF TICKETS: _____