



Mission Alabama: May, 2010

by Andrea Knight

100 Godly Women

The US Marines once said, “We’re looking for a few good men.” Pickens Baptist Association has taken this to a whole new level. Knowing that a new federal prison for women will open in Carrolton sometime in May 2011, the association began looking for 100 godly women who will work with the chaplaincy office in the new prison. The chaplain will actually decide which volunteers are needed and what they will do.

“God told me to start this ministry,” says Reverend Gary Farley, Pickens Baptist Association Director of Missions. “I knew something needed to be happening, and we began talking about it.” Farley gathered a team of people and began praying through the ministry possibilities.

Cynthia Calvin is one of the 100 women who will volunteer at the new federal prison. “It is a tremendous challenge, and our association has a lot of work ahead of us,” she says. But Cynthia is familiar with prison ministry and is ready to see lives changed for Christ.

“I’ve worked in the local county prison with the females for about 10 years now,” says Cynthia. “I read an article in *Mission Mosaic*, and the Lord just kept laying the women on my heart. I contacted the local chief of police, and they let me and my sister-in-law go into the Carrollton County Jail in Aliceville.”



Cynthia and at least one other volunteer visit with the inmates on a weekly basis. They lead Bible studies, pray with the women and lead worship songs.

“We just have a great time together worshipping,” says Cynthia. “I’ve seen many women come to know the Lord through the ministry, and that’s why we go – to tell them about Jesus.”

Cynthia plans to serve at the new prison, which will house 1,200 to 1,500 female inmates and will bring in 300 to 400 staff members, as well.

“This will be a lot bigger than just our association,” says Farley. As a result, the association is working with Alabama Baptist volunteers and others from all Christian faith families, such as Methodists, Church of God and Mennonites.

“I feel like when you get that kind of influx of folks, you need to do something about it,” says Farley.

And boy has the association “done something about it.” In a matter of months, Pickens Association has created a list of many types of ministries that could serve the inmates, prison employees and the families of inmates. There are opportunities for both men and women to serve in prison ministry.

Possible ministries include Bible studies with inmates, worship services, a visitors program, pen pals, education programs and literature distribution. In addition, the association hopes to minister to the needs of the prison staff as well.

Farley says 100 Godly Women will undergird the chaplain’s program at the new prison. “We are praying that God will send a chaplain who will want many ministries to come into the prison,” says Cynthia.

But the association doesn’t want to stop there. One idea that has been suggested is to provide short-term daycare for the children of inmates and/or their relatives during the times when relatives are visiting the inmates. Another idea is to provide housing for families when they come from out of town to visit an inmate on a weekend.

As of now, the association is preparing to train all volunteers who complete the application process. When the new chaplain arrives (which will probably be in early 2011), the association will give a list of possible volunteers to the chaplain. The list will include the background of each volunteer as well as a statement of why the person wants to volunteer and how they can assist the chaplaincy program. In addition, each volunteer will have agreed to adhere to a basic statement of faith and the chaplain will be told which training workshops each volunteer has completed.

The Association is hosting an informational meeting for anyone interested in prison ministry on Saturday, May 15, 2010, from 9:30 a.m. to noon, at the Mount Hebron Missionary Baptist Church in Aliceville. Mary Kay Beard, former prison inmate and founder of The Angel Tree Ministry, is the featured speaker. Contact Pickens Baptist Association at 205-367-8632 for more information.

Your giving through the Cooperative Program supports this ministry. Alabama Baptist State Missionary Ray Baker serves as the prison ministry coordinator in the Office of Christian Ethics and Chaplaincy Ministries for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. From day one Baker has supported this new ministry of Pickens Association and has helped them get organized. He will also help the volunteers receive training and needed supplies for the ministry.

Members of Pickens Association have been involved in ministry at the county jail for more than 15 years, which Farley says set the stage for their involvement at the new federal prison. “This is not a new gate for our folks. They’ve been involved for a good long time,” he says.

And members plan to continue this new ministry for another “good long time.” With volunteers coming from throughout Pickens Association and the surrounding areas, the association hopes to build a strong base from which to assist the chaplaincy program.

Prayer Requests

- Pray for godly leadership in the chaplaincy program. Ask God to make His will clear to the leadership.
- Pray that God will continue to call out volunteers to do hands-on ministry in the prison.
- Ask God to continue to keep new ideas flowing into the ministry.
- Pray that volunteers will boldly speak the Name of Jesus to inmates but will be cautious when necessary. Ask that volunteers will remember the lessons they learn in the training workshops.

Ways to Get Involved

- Your gifts through the Cooperative Program help fund many Great Commission Ministries.
- There are many opportunities to volunteer with the chaplaincy program.
- If you have experience with prison ministry, volunteer to lead a conference teaching others how to be involved.
- Attend the Pickens Baptist Association informational meeting on May 15th or another of their training workshops.
- Volunteer at one of the other federal prisons in Alabama. One prison is located on the Air Force base in Montgomery and the other is in Talladega.
- Volunteer at one of the state prisons in Alabama or at a county jail.
- Begin or expand a prison ministry in a state or county jail.