Training Leaders in Prison

Congregants of Celebration Fellowship Christian Reformed Church are learning to be leaders within their context. That context is the Bellamy Creek Correctional Facility and the Handlon Correctional Facility in Ionia, Mich.

“The reason we do this is because [inmates] don’t have anything that a normal church would have for crisis situations,” said Andy Hanson, pastor of Celebration Fellowship. “And they are in a continual crisis: a hostile environment and removed from family. So we’re teaching the men how to care for one another.”

Hanson has been using Timothy Leadership Training to train anywhere from five to 40 inmates.

“The great thing about the teaching is that it’s inductive. This method pulls the right solutions for the problems from the guys’ situations:”

“It’s another tool in our belt for implementing the work of the Holy Spirit here at Handlon,” said Ken, an inmate. “TLT has given me the confidence to put into action what I’m learning from the Scriptures.”

One week, a man who had spent over 20 years in solitary confinement and had not been to the training before, suddenly began to speak up.

“This man has a difficult time communicating with people, but he began pointing at each guy saying, ‘I saw you spending time with that person.’ He went on to say, ‘This is real. I didn’t think it was, but now I know that you guys are real,’” said Hanson.

“In prison, talk is really cheap. People care what you do, not what you say. The Lord had taken what they had done, and done more than what they had set out to do. In two weeks’ time, there were five men in the prison who didn’t feel alone anymore, and then there was Will, this guy who witnessed it, was inspired by it, and encouraged:”

—Daina Kraai

NOTEWORTHY

- First Christian Reformed Church in Hamilton, Ontario, received a Heritage Conservation Award for preserving the architectural heritage of the region, following a major restoration of its 130-year-old building.
- The Edmonton Christian High School Lions won their first-ever boys’ basketball gold medal in the Alberta Schools’ Athletic Association 3A division. At 350 students, Edmonton Christian High is one of the smallest schools in the city.
- Providence Christian College in Pasadena, Calif., has been granted initial accreditation by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges.
- Anneke Branderhorst, a teacher at Calvin Christian High School in Fridley, Minn., has received the 2013 “Courage to Teach” award given by Tolerance Minnesota. The award was given for her passionate teaching about the Holocaust.
- Nicole Michmerhuizen, Abigail Streelman, and John Strikwerda, all of West Michigan, were recently awarded the prestigious Barry Goldwater Scholarship, which recognizes outstanding undergraduate scholars in mathematics, engineering, and the natural sciences. All three students are studying at Calvin College.
- Case Vink, a member of Emmanuel Christian Reformed Church in Calgary, Alberta, recently received an Award of Excellence for Pastoral Practice in Education from the Canadian Association for Spiritual Care (CASC), a national multifaith organization for chaplains and pastoral counselors.
- Sewa Adegorite, Mark Hanna, and Angelo Duraisingham, all students at Toronto District Christian High School, recently travelled to Ottawa, Ontario, to meet with Canada’s Finance Minister, Jim Flaherty.

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