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Bible Baptist pastor finds prisoner ministry rewarding

By DORA CORBETT

On the day that Hurricane Bertha passed through Pender County, Sandy Ashley sat in her jail cell and wished her friend - Rev. Carl Gibbs - could visit as he has most Fridays for the past four years.

Ms. Ashley wrote a letter to the volunteer prison minister in which she said in part "...I want you to know how much it means to me for you and Larry Brown to come. You have made a difference in my life as I know you have in a lot of others."

She also wrote a poem depicting her plight and what the prison ministry of Gibbs and Brown have meant to her.

Here is a portion of Sandy Ashley's poem.

"It Is Worth the Time"

As I sit here in my cell, there's so much I'd like to tell.

But who would hear my desperate plea? Who would listen or believe me? I've done so much. Where did I go wrong? I ask myself. Will my stay here be short or long? Someone help me, hear my cry. Maybe someone will help me by and by.

Then one day, Bible in hand, two men came to see me in my cell; a story they had come to tell, of a man who died for our sins on the cross. If I accept Him as my savior, I would be saved and not be lost. And all I had to do was believe and ask, to be saved, a simple task.

Rev. Gibbs is pastor of Bible Baptist and Rev. Brown is pastor of Wallace Baptist Tabernacle.

Gibbs began his prison ministry in 1992 after area ministers were invited to tour the jail and become unofficial chaplains.

Gibbs said he has had the opportunity to lead several prisoners to Jesus Christ.

At least 100 prisoners at the Pender Correctional Center have joined a group in a Bible correspondence course called "Source of Light."

and allow him and his partner to sing and pray with prisoners who say, "Hey man, we want to talk."

Bible Baptist and Christian radio 1470 AM have provided some literature and headsets for prisoners on a limited basis as funds are available.

Gibbs agreed that a prison ministry is at times discouraging, but he does not doubt that it is worthwhile.

"Yes, it is worth it," he said, "if I can lead one to accept Jesus Christ as saviour and let Him change a life!"



REV. CARL GIBBS

"They are looking for a better quality of life and don't want to spend the rest of their lives behind a fence," Gibbs said.

The ministry includes transporting released prisoners and does not end with their release. Gibbs says he follows up and now has families of ex-convicts attending his church.

The pastor pulled a file of letters from a prisoner now in Fort Worth, Texas who wrote, "Thank you for showing me the way back to Christ. I am a new creature. The federal prosecutor may not believe it, but I know better."

The prisoner also wrote, "I do not react or think the way I used to. I am much calmer now. I wish no evil on anyone."

Gibbs once worked with the Yoke fellows, but feels he is more successful in a one-on-one situation. He said the jail officers are very cooperative

Rev. Gibbs Speaks At Victory Revival

Revival services are in progress at Victory Baptist Church in Lake Lure this week.

The visiting minister is the Rev. Carl G. Gibbs, a native of Greensboro. Rev. Gibbs attended local schools there and graduated in 1948. Shortly after, he enlisted in the Marines and served four years. It was in 1950 that Rev. Gibbs accepted a call to the ministry and after completing his tour of duty he entered Gardner-Webb College.

Upon completion of Gardner-Webb he entered Elon College and graduated in 1955 with a BA degree.

Rev. Gibbs has pastored two churches prior to his present church, the Tabernacle Baptist Church of Spartanburg. He has been at the Tabernacle Church for the past nine years.

The Rev. Gibbs is married to the former Jessie M. Page of Clement and they have four daughters.

Roxboro: Courier-Times

Rutherfordton: Rutherford Co. News

Scotland Neck: Commonwealth

Selma: Johnstonian-Sun

Shallotte: Brunswick Beacon

Shelby: Cleveland Times

Siler City: Chatham News

Smithfield: Herald

Snow Hill: Greene Co. Ledger

Southern Pines: Pilot

Southport: State Port Pilot

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