

Metanoia MINISTRIES



Annual Report 2021

Pictured above, Jeremy P. (right), who has since been released from Walker State F&CB Prison in Rock Spring, GA, became the second prisoner in the nation to earn a Doctor of Ministry degree with MINTS Seminary in Prison.

Mark Casson, Executive Director
Metanoia Ministries
www.metanoiaprisonministries.org

Remember the prisoners as if chained with them – those who are mistreated – since you yourselves are in the body also. (Hebrews 13:3 NKJV)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND HIGHLIGHTS

Mark Casson
Executive Director

Brent Andersen
Board President

Strategic Highlights

I began last year's report with the words, "2020 is a year most of us would like to forget." I could probably rewrite that sentence with "2021..." Although last year was made difficult once again due to Covid, Metanoia was able to return to its strength: mobilization. Men and women returned to mentoring in GA and TN, and a new mentor ministry was begun at Bledsoe County Correctional in TN. In addition, many of our mentors in SC maintained their relationships through the use of institutional e-mail communications. In April, Tim Busch came on staff as our Mentor Ministry Facilitator. Tim is a product of Metanoia's full ministry. He was once a correspondence student and went through all our courses. He also had a mentor, and Metanoia assisted him with his reintegration into a local church. It is a joy to work alongside him in our Chattanooga, TN office. At the end of 2021 we were blessed to also add Rev. Jason Dalton to our ranks. Jason is serving as our Regional Director for Central Florida. With Jason, we now have Regional Directors in the 4 largest prison systems in the country!

Financial Highlights

We are pleased to report that Metanoia finished 2021 on the soundest financial footing in our history thanks in part to December, which was our best month of support ever! We are very thankful for the many financial investors who have partnered with us, including the individuals, churches, presbyteries, foundations, and corporations that allow us to minister to prisoners.

Operating Highlights

- The Correspondence Ministry touched more than 1,800 prisoners in 2021. We averaged 60 new student requests per month!
- We added 128 new Corresponding Disciples to our ranks.
- As things gradually opened up, we were able to conduct 16 mentor trainings which produced a total of 74 new mentors between SC, GA and TN. Twenty of those new mentors were women who serve The Next Door Facility in Chattanooga, TN.
- We launched a new mentor ministry at Bledsoe County Correctional Facility in Pikeville, TN.
- Metanoia was able to provide more former prisoners with assistance in reintegration (see Front Cover note below).

Board Highlights

Metanoia's Board of Directors met in June, 2021 in Chattanooga, TN for what was our first face-to-face meeting in 2 years. It was the last meeting with our previous President, Mr. Jim Prieb, before he stepped down. Jim served for 8 years as both a member and president and we are deeply thankful for his service and love of prison ministry. The Board elected Mr. Brent Andersen to serve as our President and Mr. John Theoharis to serve as vice-President. We also added Mrs. Leslie Cory as a new member.

Prayer Requests

- Please pray for two new board members, as two current members will roll off in June. Please pray also for the Board and Executive Director as they develop Metanoia's strategic plan for the next five years over the summer.
- Please pray for all prisons to re-open post-Covid. Even still, several entire prison systems and some individual prisons are shut down to volunteers. Many prisoners have gone 2 years without any outside volunteers, and in some cases, no family visitation.
- Please pray for deepening relationships between our volunteers and the prisoners they serve.
- Please pray for our financial support to remain strong as we enter our third year of Covid and all that it brings with it.

Front Cover

The cover photo of this report shows Barry Smith (left), our Regional Director of TN and Northwest GA, and Jeremy P. (right), a former prisoner who was released from Walker State F&CB Prison at the end of 2021. Jeremy had two different mentors in our mentoring ministry and was connected via Metanoia to a local church about four years prior to his release. In those four years, Jeremy and the church developed a relationship through correspondence and visitation, and he was able to join with them in fellowship the first Sunday following his release. While at Walker State F&CB Prison, Jeremy earned his Master of Arts in Theology and Doctorate of Ministry degrees. It is our hope that he will be joining our staff sometime in 2022!

CORRESPONDENCE MINISTRY

Metanoia's unique discipleship-through-correspondence ministry touched more than 1,800 prisoners in 2021! In addition, we added 128 new, volunteer Corresponding Disciplers. As always, many prisoners come and go, but that doesn't change our commitment to providing one-on-one discipleship. We have volunteer Corresponding Disciplers who have been with the same student for five, ten, and even twelve years! Just imagine what sort of relationship develops through monthly correspondence over such time. Our volunteers greatly enjoy the studies which help their own Christian walk, and for many of our students, this is the only personal contact they have with someone on the outside who isn't a staff member at the facility where they reside. By communicating through correspondence, our Corresponding Disciplers are certainly among those about whom it is written: "When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?" [Then] the King will reply, "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me" (Matthew 25:39-40).

Metanoia is also blessed to be in our eleventh year of a strategic relationship with Ligonier Ministries. Ligonier supplies advanced coursework for prisoners who have finished the Metanoia studies. We offer many studies and tools, including R.C. Sproul lectures on CDs where allowed.

Testimonial from a Corresponding Disciplex in NC

"My spiritual ambition ever since I was saved in 1974 has primarily focused on discipleship and mentoring. Metanoia Ministries provides an excellent opportunity to fulfill this important aspect of spiritual maturity for the incarcerated."

Matters for Prayer

- For Shelly Marshall, Correspondence Ministry Coordinator, as she juggles everything it takes to effectively manage the coursework and mailings of thousands of booklets each year.
- For more Corresponding Disciplers and more students.
- For our students to grow greatly in their knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.
- Pray for Metanoia to find a way to encourage more new students to send back their first booklets, and especially for more female students to send back their first booklets.

Testimonial from a Corresponding Disciplex in SC

"When I first heard [about Metanoia] at our church, I was thrilled. I am limited by my physical condition for involvement in most active ministries, so when the opportunity to be a part of grading lessons for inmates using your superb study materials, I jumped at the chance...I have been working on the study booklets for a number of years now and find that the individuals who have submitted Bible studies for me to grade have truly lifted my heart. I have worked with four inmates so far and found them to be folks who really appreciated studying with the Metanoia materials...I look forward to continuing as long as the Lord enables me to do so, and eagerly await more students to work with. I have benefitted in my own spiritual growth by my participation."



LIFE-ON-LIFE MENTOR MINISTRY

Sporadic visits and one-off interactions in prisons have little potential to bring transformation. We don't do "drive-by" ministry. Our mentors enter into one-on-one, personal relationships with prisoners after undergoing special training to understand prisoners and prison culture. They enrich prisoners' lives through guidance, encouragement, accountability, and love. Intentional, regular visits multiple times a month nurture prisoners' long-term spiritual well-being and life skills to benefit prisoners upon release.

Current and Soon-to-be-Launched Mentoring Locations

- Walker State F&CB Prison, Rock Spring, GA
- Hays State Prison, Trion, GA
- The Next Door (Women's), Chattanooga, TN
- Bledsoe County Correction Complex, Pikeville, TN
- Perry Correctional Institution, Pelzer, SC

Mentoring Updates

2021 was an interesting year. For over half the year, we had no in-person mentoring anywhere. The Next Door in TN and Walker Faith & Character Based Prison in GA reopened at around the same time. The GA reopening was gradual, and Metanoia was the first volunteer organization invited back inside Walker. Thankfully, many mentors had maintained their relationships with their partners via mail. Unfortunately, the long period without in-person Mentoring had caused many volunteers to let their credentials expire. Getting everyone renewed and ready was a challenge, but a wonderful spirit of cooperation helped get the job done. The GA Dept. of Corrections even created a streamlined process to help people to renew credentials. Volunteers were not able to get back into SC facilities in 2021, but we did start a mentoring program in the Bledsoe County Correctional Complex in Pikeville, TN. As more opportunities arise, we thank God for continuing to bless our ministry. However, more opportunities also mean a need for even more volunteers. Spread the word!

Mentoring Statistics to Date

- 414 mentors (men and women) trained in three states.
- 25,064 hours of mentoring completed over eight years (that's 2.68 years of nonstop mentoring!).
- 500+ prisoners have experienced individual, life-on-life mentoring.
- 2.11% recidivism rate for our former mentees (national average exceeds 60%).

Matters for Prayer

- For all state prison systems to reopen to volunteers.
- For volunteers to remain patient as we await reopening in many places. We need the whole Armor of God.
- For new mentoring programs to be launched in NC, SC, TN, and TX.
- For God to raise up men and women to meet the need of the many prisoners currently waiting to be mentored in the facilities where we operate.
- For perseverance for our staff, mentors, and chaplains in faith and service in this ministry.

From a Mentor in TN

"I have been blessed to recently be paired with a mentoring partner at the Bledsoe County Correctional Complex in Pikeville, TN. As a former inmate, I was convinced that I had something to offer a current prisoner, and I was excited to finally be able to "give back" to the ministry that has served me so well. However, I was also anxious about walking back into a prison for the first time since my release. As usual, my anxiety was for naught. The welcome by the prison staff was warm and genuine, and meeting my mentoring partner only made me feel more at ease. We became fast friends and agreed right away that we could work well together. Although our relationship is only a few months old, I already feel that I have gained more from it than he has. I look forward to traveling to the prison twice a month, and I thank the Lord for blessing me with this opportunity."

NOTES FROM OUR REGIONAL DIRECTORS



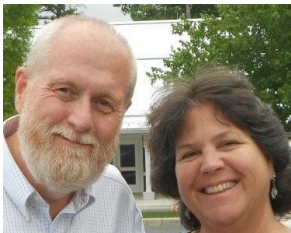
Tim McCracken (CA) - After having closed all State prisons to volunteers from March 2020 - April 2021, the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation began to re-open. Two of the weekly chapel opportunities opened in April, three more in May, and five more in July. The remaining chapel facilities (all at SATF and Corcoran) have never opened. Since that time, various interruptions have still come, due to short-staff situations or new medical lockdowns. The longest of those closed down one yard since September, with two more shutting down for most of November and December. All in all, when yards have been open, the opportunity continues to be outstanding. Consistent average weekly chapel attendance across the various groups is about 75, and with visitors we've seen a total of 295 individuals for at least one service. On six of the yards, I was able (in addition to the chapel services) to offer one resource in the Discipleship Resource Program, working through the book *Resolving Every-Day Conflict*, by Ken Sande and Kevin Johnson. Twenty men showed sufficient interest and attendance to receive the book. I'm pleased to report the prospect of two new volunteers in the coming months. One of those two has already received clearance, and the other is a retired correctional officer.



Paul Miller (TX) - Praise God that the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) reopened its units to volunteers in late Spring of 2021! Since reopening, I have had many opportunities to preach, teach, and recruit new applicants for our correspondence ministry. On one particular Unit, TDCJ officials requested that I teach multiple classes known as Individualized Treatment Plan (ITP). ITP helps inmates deal with issues ranging from addiction issues to challenges facing them at reentry. These programs are rich in a Christian ethos, and they help inmates see that the ultimate purpose of life is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. I also lead chapel services and counsel inmates in person and through correspondence. I am also grateful for the new opportunities to partner with PCA churches throughout Texas. Our reformed brothers and sisters are responding to the call of reaching prisoners with the love of Christ. I am also in conversations with several prison officials about bringing our mentoring ministry to their Units. I praise God for all of the ways He is using Metanoia Prison Ministries in the Lone Star State. God's mercies are new every morning, and great is His faithfulness!



Tony Rogers (SC) - In spite of the prisons remaining closed to outsiders over the course of last year, I managed to establish contact with some new prisoners and continued to keep up with old ones and provide encouragement and establish relationships between them and area churches, especially prisoners who were on the verge of being released. I also spoke at various churches, stirring them up to prayer for prisoners, for the work of the ministry, and especially that the doors would soon be open and that the Lord would provide many people to be mentors. Once the prisons open this year, Lord willing, I hope to transition from part time to full time and ramp up my efforts along all of these lines.



Barry Smith (TN, GA) - 2021 began the same way 2020 ended, with all prisons closed to outside ministries due to the pandemic. At Walker State Prison in Georgia, where we have 100 mentors, mentoring continued through letter writing. At The Next Door, a women's transition facility, many women continued mentoring over video chats. I wrote weekly devotionals and held monthly Mentor Meetups on Zoom to keep mentors engaged and encouraged. Last summer facilities began to reopen, and Metanoia was the first ministry asked to return to Walker. In-person mentoring resumed at both Walker and The Next Door in August. Since prison reopened, we have started mentoring ministries at two Tennessee state prisons, Bledsoe County Correctional Complex men's and women's prisons. And, we have connected with Hays State Prison in Georgia. There is only one mentor serving at Hays now, but Lord willing, that ministry will grow in 2022. I also serve as our liaison with MINTS Seminary-in-Prison. In 2021, during the first half of the year, classes for the seminary at Walker State Prison were taught by inmates who had previously earned master's degrees. By the end of the year professors returned to teaching classes.



Jason Dalton (FL) - I am so thankful to the Lord for allowing me the opportunity to serve His people in prison with Metanoia. I joined Metanoia at the end of 2021, and I will be serving as the Regional Director for Florida. Florida has the third-largest prison system in our country, and I am reminded of Christ's words: "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest." That is why I am looking forward to partnering with local churches to meet this great need. In faith, I am thrilled to see what God has in store for His ministry in the state of Florida.

A TESTIMONY OF GOD'S GRACE



Greetings, I'm Mark Casson. It is my joy and privilege to serve as the Executive Director of Metanoia Prison Ministries. Currently, there are approximately 150,000 evangelical Christian men and women incarcerated in the United States. I believe that God has called Metanoia to remind the Church of their brothers and sisters that reside behind fences and razor wire. Ours is an enabling ministry which assists the Church in its ministry to the incarcerated. Please consider joining and supporting Metanoia as we "Remember the prisoner as though chained with them" (Hebrews 13:3a).

From a Corresponding Disciple in TX

It has been a blessing to me to serve our Lord and Savior through this ministry. I was introduced to Metanoia by a friend of mine [many years ago]. That was also the month I was diagnosed with a little known, progressive disease with no known cure. I was limited in my ability to serve my Lord and Savior in my church as the pain and disability progressed. However, God in His absolute sovereignty provided me with a ministry that did not require me to be on my feet or being in the busyness of my church. At this point in my service to the young men assigned to me, I know that it is God's choice each time I am assigned a new student. It is an honor to work through each lesson with them and encourage them in their walk with Christ. Each student is so different, needing more personal attention and encouragement, or maybe just someone to listen to their struggles...I love my work with the students and Metanoia. Every grader should be pleased and give glory to God when one of their students has had a spiritual awakening after completing a lesson. While I may be there to grade and encourage the student, so many times I am the one encouraged...Thank you for allowing me to serve our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ through this ministry. God is so good.

 P.O. Box 11092
Chattanooga, TN 37401

Metanoia engages, educates, and equips the Church for the discipleship, mentoring and reintegration of prisoners.

The mission field is at our doorstep with 6.6M individuals under correctional supervision (2% of the US population)— including Christians.

Recidivism drops for prisoners who are disciplined, who build godly relationships, and who integrate into caring churches upon release.

Donate to:
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Designate - Metanoia / Casson
PO Box 890233
Charlotte, NC 28289-0233

Contact Mark Casson:
mcasson@pcanet.org
(559) 681-7858

Website:
www.metanoiaprisonministries.org