

Titus House Newsletter

Titus House Ministries, PO Box 2376, Tijeras, NM 87059

DECEMBER
2017



WHAT IS IT LIKE TO SPEND CHRISTMAS IN PRISON? By Don Johnston, Editor

I was in prison for 14 Christmases, fourteen years without being with my kids. A Pastor once told me that God has a heart for children and widows, that God will take care of my kids for me while I was away. This was for me a ray of hope, a promise, that God will be with my children. It made time for me a little bit easier knowing I could trust God and He has my back. I had to concentrate on getting my life straight with God and society. Although it might have been a time of incarceration for me, it was a time for restoration. It seems a terrible thing to spend Christmas locked in jail or prison, but it is safer there



than living on the street or in a life of sin. On the outside I could have died from an overdose or making a drug deal, a stabbing or being shot because of a home robbery gone bad or gotten AIDs from the prostitutes I visited. From what I have observed, this was a safe place for a man on a slippery slide to hell, a temporary refuge for a person who has lost his way. As I sobered, I had the time to think about my life and the choices I had made. Being a Christian on Christmas means more to me now than gifts and Santa Claus. It means the greatest gift of all, the gift that God gave His son to come to earth as a baby in a manger. But the message of Christmas doesn't end there. Jesus died for my sins on a cross on a hill at Mount Calvary for a sinner like me. When I went to Chapel for Christmas or had a Christmas meal with my brothers in prison I

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TOUGH TO STAY OUT OF PRISON by John

Hi Don and Alice, How have you all been? Good I hope. Well, I'm doing good although I'm in prison. I wanted to write you and thank you so much for sending me letters each month and keeping me informed on what is going on out in the world. It's so nice to get info on what's happening with S.O.s and the law. I tell you it's so cool you keep us up to date with legal issues going on and I want to thank you so much. It is so nice to get a letter from you each month to make my day.

I used to have a Pen Pal at one time, but I'm not sure what happened to her. She knew about all my charges but after five months her letters just quit coming in. But it's OK since I've been down you have sent me a letter every month. I want to thank you so much, not from the bottom of my heart but from all of my heart. I tell you it's so nice to get a letter from someone. So anyway my Parole Release Date is March 26, 2019. If I get my GED – which I'm working on real hard – I will

be able to get out Dec. 26, 2018. Thank God! I will still have the 5 – 20 but I'm going to do my best to stay out, get a job, and find a place to live. I know lots of things I can't do: hang around felons, nothing with sex, phones, mags, porn, movies, and drugs (I don't like drugs.) No more than one phone, no parks, schools, swimming pools, etc. I know that I have to get a job, keep it and be home at 6 PM, check in everyday and so on. But it's better than being in prison!

But anyway again I want to thank you for sending me a letter every month. It really does make my day. So I would like to say before I end this letter. May God keep you safe all the days of your life. I'll keep you in my prayers. I hope you have a wonderful day. God Bless you both, John.....
And John, after reading your letter, I did have a wonderful day!!! Alice



Christmas in Prison (continue from page 1)

could really be **thankful** for what I got, **a second chance on life**. This can only be done when those who have been bound and shackled come to know their true identity in Christ Jesus. People make mistakes every day, and some never get caught, but I was lucky. Because I was caught and by divine grace I

have a second chance. You can use the trials to your benefit. This is part of God's greater plan. This time of spending Christmas in jail/prison can benefit us greatly if we can believe it to be part of a greater plan. When an inmate begins to look at his situation in the light of what is possible in a future with Je-

sus, he or she has already been set free. Now that my prison time has ended, and I am once again in the midst of the sights and sounds of Christmas, I whisper, "Happy Birthday Jesus! But for You, we would all be bound and shackled."

Book Review

by Charles

Hi Don & Alice, I am currently pursuing a Bachelor degree in Religious Studies. In the current course I am to do a research paper. I plan on the topic of The Effect of Pornography. One of the sources I use talks about the use of pornography in the acts of sexual offences. By using this, it made the offender to act out what they just viewed. That was my case, I have met other

offenders in here who had the same problem. For the most part we try to look for ways to not reoffend also how to become better individuals. This includes turning to God in faith. In this environment people make the excuse of NOT going to Chapel Service because of Child Molesters. The reason we go is this is where we find the healing we need. Also, this is where we find the answer on how not to be our old self. One thing that is to our disadvantage is that certain programs and jobs that may

pay us a little money is off limits to sex offenders. I wanted to share this with you. I am grateful for ministries that are specific to sex offenders. I do not know if you have heard of Steve Gallagher "At the Altar of Sexual Idolatry" and "Out of the Depths of Sexual Sin". If another of those in prison or on the outside can get these books, they may be of a help.

Don -I bought "At the Altar of Sexual Idolatry". Very good book.

Churches aren't schools, rules Indiana Court of Appeals

By Olivia Covington .

... Three convicted Boone County sex offenders can return to their church congregations after the Indiana Court of Appeals determined that churches are not considered "school property," so state statute cannot prohibit the offenders from going to church, even when children are present.

The appellate court handed down that decision Tuesday in John Doe 1, et al., v. The Boone County Prosecutor, in his official capacity, et al., 06A01-1612-PL-2741. The case dates to 2015, when the Indiana General Assembly passed the "unlawful entry by a serious sex offender" statute, Indiana Code section 35-42-4-14. That statute prohibits "serious sex offenders" from accessing school property.

According to the statute, "school property" is defined as any "nonprofit program or service operated to ... benefit children who are at least three years of age and not yet enrolled in kindergarten." Based on that language, the Boone County prosecutor sent a letter to all registered sex offenders in the county informing them they could only attend church if their churches do not offer

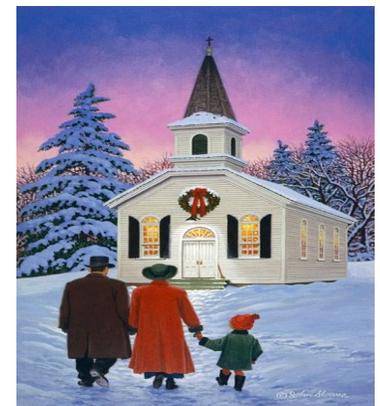
classes or services for young children.

But because each of their churches offered children's programming simultaneously or nearly simultaneously with adult services or Bible studies, three sex offenders known as John Does 1, 2 and 3, filed suit claiming the sheriff's letter effectively prohibited them from attending church at any time. The Does sought declaratory and injunctive relief, alleging churches don't meet the definition of "school property," but the Boone Superior Court denied such relief, finding instead that the churches are only "school property" when children's programming is in session.

The trial court also rejected the Does' argument that the statute violates Indiana's Religious Freedom Restoration Act, which prohibits the government from substantially burdening a person's religious exercise unless there is a compelling interest and the burden is the least restrictive means of advancing that interest. Though ACLU of Indiana Legal Director Ken Falk, who argued on appeal on behalf of the Does, claimed the offenders' case could be won on the issue of the definition of school property alone, he also told the judges on ap-

peal that if churches are school property, then the serious sex offender statute would violate their rights under RFRA.

The state, however, argued that because church programs operate to "benefit children," church buildings can be considered "school property" under that statutory language. Further, Deputy Attorney General Aaron Craft said the state had a compelling interest in protecting children from being victimized by sex offenders, and prohibiting those offenders from accessing children at church was the least restrictive means of accomplishing that interest.





Miami-Dade Commissioners Want Cops to Arrest Homeless Sex Offenders on Sight | By: SABELLA VI GOMES

For 12 years, Miami-Dade's registered sex offenders have been barred from living within 2,500 feet of any school, playground, or daycare. They're effectively homeless by law, and today hundreds live in squalor in makeshift "tent cities" under bridges, near trailer parks, and on roadsides. After *New Times* reported on a camp near Hialeah, county officials called these encampments inhumane and unsanitary and promised a solution.



That solution, though, apparently isn't to amend the law or to find transitional housing. Two commissioners now want to simply put the offenders back in jail.

RELATED STORIES

[A Month After Irma, Miami-Dade's Sex Offender Camp Is Still There](#)

[ACLU Lawsuit Dismissed, Sex Offenders Still Stuck Under the Bridge](#)

[Hundreds of Miami Sex Offenders Live in a Squalid Tent City Near Hialeah](#)

This morning, the county commission considered an ordinance that would change Miami-Dade's policy on what to do with homeless people who are found sleeping on public property. Currently, police are required to offer homeless people the chance to go to a shelter before arresting them, but under the proposed change, homeless sex offenders would be immediately arrested.

Members of the local American Civil Liberties Union and the Florida Action Committee (FAC) have already called the measure excessive punishment and are demanding that commissioners vote against it.

"Instead of building affordable housing, [the county] would rather spend money on incarceration and criminalizing homelessness," says ACLU attorney Nancy Abudu, who is defending three homeless sex offenders in a lawsuit against Miami-Dade.

Since the county passed its restrictive

laws in 2005, sex offenders across Miami-Dade have struggled to find permanent residences. Because the majority of the county is off-limits, dozens were forced to live under the Julia Tuttle Causeway until a national backlash resulted in their relocation. By 2014, the colony had been moved multiple times, eventually to a set of railroad tracks near Hialeah, where at least 233 offenders have lived in tents since then.

This past August, *New Times* investigated the encampment at NW 71st Street and NW 36th Court, which local business owners say has scared customers away and made them worry for their safety. Soon after, Homeless Trust Chairman Ron Book declared the site a "health crisis" and promised the county would shut it down as soon as possible. In spite of his remarks, the camp is still there months later.

Critics have long demanded that the county relocate sex offenders to legal housing. However, many commissioners disagree. One, in particular, has offered his own solution: placing offenders back behind bars.

Recently, Commissioner Esteban Bovo drafted a proposal to amend the county code governing overnight camping on public property. The code states that law enforcement is required to offer homeless people the opportunity to go to a shelter before arresting them. Bovo's ordinance, however, would eliminate this safeguard for sex offenders, claiming it has been an "unworkable, unduly [burden] on law enforcement" because sex offenders are ineligible to stay at homeless shelters anyway.

Bovo's ordinance, cosponsored by Commissioner Rebecca Sosa, passed its first hearing this morning and is scheduled to go to committee in December. If it's approved, homeless sex offenders would be vulnerable to immediate arrests, while other homeless people would continue to be protected under the code.

Bovo says that "as commissioners, we are tasked with identifying ways in which to keep the residents and families of Miami-Dade safe, and this item accomplishes this goal."

Many homeless advocates, however, insist the ordinance would not improve public safety.

"It's ill-informed, uninformed policy," says Gail Colletta, president of the FAC. If anything, the ordinance would put sex offenders, who are trying to be compliant with the county law, between "a rock and a hard place," she says.

"Either they stay in the area and risk violating the [ordinance], or they leave and risk arrest for violating the county's [residency restriction]," she says. "It's a lose-lose situation."

Abudu says the ordinance might also violate the state and federal constitutions because it would add time to sex offenders' criminal sentences retroactively. "It's unfair to set these people up for incarceration, where they'll be subject to poor mental-health services, overcrowding, and limited resources," she says.

Of particular concern, Colletta says, is the motivation behind the ordinance: "It seems like a pointless move on [the county's] part. Either it'll push [sex offenders] to go underground or, if they're arrested, taxpayers will be forced to foot the bill."

Instead, the ACLU and the FAC urge the county to do away with its harsh policies.

"[The county] should be getting rid of the residency restriction," Colletta says. "These people shouldn't need to live on the street in the first place."



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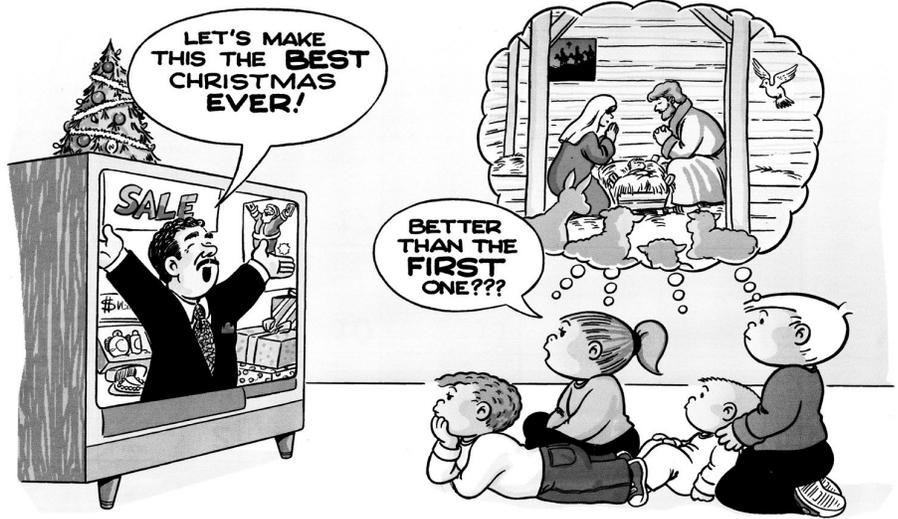
We're on the Web
titushouseministries.org

Hebrew 13:3 - Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.

Remember if you change your address you need to let us know if you want to continue to receive this newsletter



"My sermon tonight is about the Lord working in mysterious ways."



ANNUAL CHRISTMAS PARTY

Saturday December 23, 12:00 to 3:00 PM

Furr's 2004 Wyoming NE, Alb. NM

Titus House is paying the bill.

Come and eat and have fun. Live music and a magic show.

Let us know you are coming (505) 286-8807.

Hint: We could use sponsors for this project.

"Tweet others as you would want others to tweet you."



Wishing you all a blessed Christmas

Circle of Concern

Circle of Concern is aimed at breaking down isolation and fear by providing a safe place for registrants and their loved ones to get together, build community, and learn ways to step out and take charge of their lives and overcome the stigma

they face. The circle of Concern is a group of concerned registered offenders, family and friends that meet together on the 2nd Sunday of each month. We are meeting this month on December 10, 2017 at 6 pm—8 pm. We will be having a potluck. We

meet at Foothills Fellowship Church, corner of Tramway and Candelaria on the far east side of Albuquerque. We encourage and try to help each other. It is a safe place to share our strengths and struggles. We hope you will join us.