



AAMA/ LARK NEWS



Jacqueline Rozier, Editor

January 2008

Lifting Up Ex-prisoners: "The Least of These"

Story by David Powell, Virginia Mennonite Conference Peace Committee

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"The body of Christ has a mandate from God to care for the least of these," says Bishop Paul Gaskins of the Christian Conquest Ministries in Washington, DC. "I believe the body of Christ should have the heart of the Lord in its vision and purpose. And this includes the planning for the coming home of brothers and sisters from prison."

This has provided the passion behind the mission of the Conquest Reintegration Ministries (CORM), a ministry begun by Christian Conquest Fellowship, a Virginia Mennonite Conference congregation in Washington, DC. As many as 3,000 former prisoners return to the District each year, many with a limited education, no job skills, frayed family relations, and empty pockets. CORM's Transitional Housing Center (THC) provides a place for ex-prisoners to live as they reintegrate into the society around them. Structure and rules are in place at the THC to foster accountability and discipline. A compassionate Christian environment that respects the dignity of the men residing there is created. Bible studies and support groups are held on a regular basis.

According to Rev. Louis Jones, Executive Director of CORM, "one of the most trying aspects of working with ex-prisoners is finding businesses who will give them jobs." Mark Ty Purvis was told that he would never work in his field again due to his tax fraud conviction. After his release from prison, he went to Conquest House, had a roof over his head, a place to fax resumes and make phone calls, vouchers for clothing, and some of his food. "I could focus on working toward employment and a career." After a job as a temporary substitute teacher, his excellent performance led to a full-time math teacher position. He credits CORM with giving him the boost he needed to get his life back on track, and sees himself as the recipient of the Lord's blessings in his life.

Minister LaVerne Brewster of Christian Conquest Fellowship also conducts Bible studies at a detention facility for women. "We try to get them to see that while prison and drugs may have devoured them, it has not negated God's purpose for their lives," she stated. "We are excited because as we minister to these women, the Holy Spirit also pours out His Spirit upon us."

AAMA Assembly 2008 in Indiana

**Mark your calendars and prepare for an exciting time together
praising and worshipping Jesus Christ!**

The *African American Mennonite Association (AAMA)*
will hold its biennial assembly on **August 8-9, 2008**
at *Church Without Walls in Elkhart, Indiana.*

see page 2 for more information

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Churches Supporting Churches: *Rebuilding a Community*

AAMA has been involved with Churches Supporting Churches (CSC) and is encouraging AAMA churches to partner through CSC with New Orleans churches. AAMA has a representative that serves on the CSC board. Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Central Committee are part of CSC which is a partnership of denominations and ecumenical movements seeking to rebuild, repair, restart and/or reopen New Orleans churches and thus assist to redevelop areas of the city.

A few of the initiatives of CSC follows. CSC provided trauma support for pastors and their spouses and sponsored a retreat. They have assisted in housing

rehabilitation. CSC has assisted at least five churches to reopen.

CSC is seeking to mobilize "spiritual, financial and technical assistance for rebuilding and to create an effective advocacy network for the just rebuilding of New Orleans." AAMA will match the contributions given by its member congregations.

Contributions may be sent to:
African American Mennonite Association
2311 Tower Place, Hampton, VA 23666
(please designate that the funds are for CSC).

A *Churches Supporting Churches* brochure is enclosed.
 More information about *Churches Supporting Churches* also is available online at
<http://cscneworleans.org/intro.html>.

AAMA Assembly 2008 August 8th-9th *Church Without Walls* Elkhart, Indiana

AAMA Assembly 2008
 will commence on *Friday* with worship service
 and a reception following the service.

Workshop and business sessions
 will take place on *Saturday*.

Health screenings will be available on both days.

Everyone is invited to worship together
 on *Sunday* morning at the
Church Without Walls worship service.

Please look for more information
 coming in the mail.

Also, registration information may be obtained by
 March 2008 from the *AAMA office*
 at

2311 Tower Place, Hampton, Virginia
(757) 262-0128

aama_org@yahoo.com
www.aamamcusa.org

LARK LEADERSHIP SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

The Lark Leadership Scholarship Program
 seeks to enhance the ministry
 and church leadership skills
 of persons serving as leaders in
 African American Mennonite Association churches.
 AAMA church leaders are eligible to apply

for financial assistance
 to enroll in college-level courses
 which will enhance their ministry skills.
 Applications for the *Lark Leadership Scholarship*
 program may be downloaded from

www.aamamcusa.org

(click on the Lark tab)

and mailed to:

Mennonite Education Agency
63846 CR 35 • Suite 1
Goshen, IN 46528