



Locked Down For The Lord Prison Ministry, Inc.
Larry & Kathy Medford
P.O. Box 1900, Hope, AR 71802
(870) 777-7528
Email: biker4christ@cablelynx.com
Website: www.lockeddown4thelord.com

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‘And the King will say, I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me.’ Matthew 25:40

Blessings to you in this New Year. Our Christmas Behind Bars outreach was a success. We thank God and everyone who supported us in this effort. I believe we had more support than we’ve ever had this year. Friends, churches and ministry partners donated money, socks, bars of soap, Christmas cards and Christmas stamps. Trying to coordinate all of this can be challenging and there were a few problems and frustrations along the way. When that happens, we remember why we do this and that is to show those behind bars that even though they might have been forgotten by their families, God knows where they are and He loves them.

We supported nine prisons (Ouachita River Unit, Malvern, AR; Tucker Unit, Tucker, AR; Maximum Security Unit, Tucker, AR; Delta Unit, Dermott, AR; DCC, Texarkana, AR; Work Release/Regional Maintenance, Texarkana, AR and ALETA, Camden, AR) and Hempstead County Jail in Hope. This was the first time we supported the Omega House in Malvern which is a unit for parole violators that is next to Ouachita River Unit. Larry found out that the three hundred men at Omega House were only going to get two cookies so we gave them Little Debbie’s, Ramen noodles and hot cocoa.

In mid-November, we started checking prices on the items we bought in previous years. We set aside 10% of the money that comes in to the ministry for Christmas but we make donations during the year so we are thankful for those of you who help however you can. This year we bought cheese peanut butter crackers, Starlite mints, hot cocoa and Ramen noodles. Our local Sam’s Club doesn’t carry the crackers in the store so we have to order them online. We ran into problems getting the complete order but after spending a lot of time on the phone three different times, they waived the shipping fees and gave us a gift card for all the trouble we had to go through. Thank you Lord!

Larry made contact with Mr. Twiggs at the Little Debbie store in Gentry, AR in late November. He said they would donate 22,000 Little Debbie’s this year. So once again, Larry and our brother Gary Wise left very early on the morning of December 5 to be in Gentry when the store opened at 8AM. They took our big van, Samson and rented a U-Haul truck when they got closer to Gentry. They loaded the van and truck and drove back to Little Rock to unload. Someone from each prison in Arkansas comes to the central location to pick up for their unit so Larry and Gary had to make sure the correct amount was set aside for them.

December 1, Larry went to Texarkana Work Release and met with the new warden. He allowed us to give each prisoner two Christmas cards to mail out. Our brother Heavy Pennington also took Christmas cards to the prisoners at the Arkansas Law Enforcement Training Academy in Camden, AR. We mailed out ninety-seven Christmas cards this year. We receive a lot of cards too, some the men make themselves and those really touch my heart. One brother told us all he wanted for Christmas was for us to continue to be his friend.

We went to the Inmate Counsel Banquet at the Ouachita River Unit on December 16. We sat with our friend Snuffy as we have for several years. We enjoyed the food and the fellowship

with the men that were there and met some of their families. We talked to one young man's parents and found out they live about twenty-five miles from us. The next morning, we delivered the Christmas sacks to the men at Texarkana Work Release and Regional Maintenance in Texarkana, AR. When we finished there, we made our last trip to Sam's Club to pick up more Ramen noodles. We got some strange looks standing in line with over 60 cases of Ramen noodles but that gave us a chance to explain what we do with them. Later that day, we met Heavy and Alice Pennington at ALETA in Camden and gave those men their Christmas sacks. We spent some time visiting with them. One of the men who has been locked up for several years should be going home soon. They invited us to come back to their weekly Bible study.

The following Tuesday the chaplain at the Ouachita River Unit was having a party for the chapel workers. The men insisted that Larry come even though he would be there the next day for the Christmas sack distribution. They gave him a certificate of appreciation for being the Volunteer of the Year for 2016. It was quite a surprise and like he said, he doesn't do this for recognition but it is nice to know that you are appreciated. The next day, he and Gary Wise and other volunteers spent the day handing out Christmas sacks to the men at the unit. The day after that, Larry and Chaplain Flora delivered Christmas sacks to the 336 men from the Malvern unit who are housed at the Bowie County Jail in Texarkana, TX. Many of the men there have completed their sentences but don't have a place to parole out to. On Christmas Eve, Larry, Darryl Fox and I went to the Department of Community Correction in Texarkana, AR for their Christmas sack distribution. We took our keyboard and I played Christmas music while the men came through the chow hall to get their sacks. They have had some problems there recently and the men have been on lock down more than usual. Darryl holds Bible studies with the men twice each week and averages about ten men at each study.

That evening, Larry and I went to the Hempstead County Jail to hand out their sacks. They had a tree in their entry way that was decorated with black and blue in memory of fallen officers. It was a very touching tribute. There was only one woman in jail so the officer took me back to her cell. When I went in the door, I recognized that she was the daughter of friends of ours. She was very thankful for what we brought. We prayed together and had a good visit. One of the last young men Larry gave a sack to was Alex. He was in a cell by himself and told Larry he was sick and thought he was going to die. Larry asked him where he would go if he died and he said to hell. Larry's response was that they could fix that right there. Alex prayed to receive Christ and asked for a Bible. We didn't have any Bibles with us but as soon as we got home, Larry got a Bible and took it back to the jail for Alex. I think this was a perfect way to end our Christmas Behind Bars outreach for 2016, don't you?

Another blessing we got as I was working on the newsletter was a letter from a young man in prison in Texas. His name is Brian. Larry ministered to his dad, Rollie for several years in the Arkansas prison system before Rollie gave his life to the Lord. After Rollie passed away, we started writing to Brian and his brother who are both incarcerated. Brian is up for parole this year. He thanked us for being a part of his life and said he believes the Lord put us in his life. Brian would like to be a part of our ministry and go back in prison and share his testimony. Letters like this are an encouragement to us and we know Rollie would be proud of Brian.

Christmas is eleven months away but we would like to find some churches that would be willing to collect socks or soap throughout the year. If you are interested in doing that, please contact us. We don't know what 2017 holds in store but we know the Lord has work for us to do. We trust God will continue to supply our needs through people like you who are kingdom minded and believe in our work for the Lord. We are grateful for your prayers and financial support.

Blessings,

Larry & Kathy