



# Captive Souls ... Mercy for All

## LWML Supports Prison Ministry

BY FEATURES EDITOR, BECKY WEHRSPANN

A 2017–2019 Mission Grant for \$36,000 helped fund the August 2018 Prison and Jail Ministry Conference in St. Louis under the theme “Captive Souls ... Mercy for All”. “The LWML has been a tremendous partner for Prison Ministry,” Jon Hohgreffe, Chairman of the Southern Illinois District Prison Ministry Task Force, says. The LWML also provided funds for a similar conference in 2012.

### Some direct outcomes of the 2018 conference include:

- Expanded network of nearly 200 prison ministry contacts, including volunteers, chaplains, and district coordinators, increasing the transparency of prison ministry. “When we learn of people who want to be involved, we try to provide education, contacts, and support for that person to become active,” says Don Sundene, Prison and Jail Ministry Contract Coordinator. The conference allowed for that networking to happen. Hohgreffe agrees. “Networking is a big key to these conferences so that we have support; it is such a blessing from God,” he says.
- Developed a Facebook page (*LCMS Specialized Pastoral Ministry*) with regular updates regarding prison ministry resources.
- Produced a video: “Not Forgotten: The Story of Jack Baird,” was released in 2019. Jack Baird received instruction and care from an LCMS chaplain during his 11-year prison sentence, leading to repentance of his sin and his baptism while incarcerated. Watch at [www.vimeo.com/374464323](http://www.vimeo.com/374464323).

“We had a lot of positive feedback on the conference,” Hohgreffe says. “We can’t thank the LWML enough for the support as the effects of these conferences continue to be felt.” One of those continued effects comes from LWML groups who make paper crosses, often using recycled greeting cards, with Bible verses affixed to them. These are distributed to inmates as a reminder that they are never alone — that Jesus is always with them.

The need for Prison Ministry is never ending. The conference provided great resources and tools for anyone wanting to be involved at nearly every level. More resources are available at [lcms.org/specializedpastoralministry](http://lcms.org/specializedpastoralministry), including videos from the 2018 conference, District Coordinator information, devotions, and scholarship applications.

Hohgreffe attended the LWML Convention in Mobile in 2019 where he built relationships with the women attending, as well as with the other exhibitors. “I can’t stress enough what a blessing the LWML is to prison ministry. From the simple acts of praying for Prison Ministry in general, praying for a volunteer that you know (or don’t know,) or putting your mites together to make ministry happen, volunteers benefit tremendously from the blessing that you all are. I encourage each of you to keep praying in your personal devotions and prayers as we can do all things through Christ, who saves and watches over us.” Q