



# Alpha Prison Ministries Newsletter

## February 2025 Edition

*"I was in prison and you came to visit me." Matthew 25:36*

## Staffing Shortages in Michigan Prisons

As our ministry partners are aware, APM's mission is, "To evangelize and disciple men who happen to be prisoners and former inmates," and it's been a while since we restated that in a newsletter. However, after five full years since in prison ministry was suspended, only one facility served by APM has allowed us to resume our "normal" activities.

We can not and will not fault the facilities or staff for this situation, they are dealing with serious staffing shortages that remain unresolved. According to one housegop.org source I found on this situation:

*Corrections officers are regularly forced to work mandatory 16-hour shifts due to rampant staffing shortages across Michigan prisons. The Michigan Department of Corrections employs 5,500 officers to oversee 33,000 felons across 26 facilities. The Michigan Corrections Organization reports that nearly half of Michigan prisons have staffing vacancies above 20%, with five facing vacancies over 30%.*

We experience the effects of this state of affairs first hand but efforts are being made with bipartisan support to at least partially address the crisis. Problems like this cannot be resolved simply by throwing money at them but money is a necessary part of the solution.

On this money front part of the solution, bills have already been approved to address benefits and retirement options for corrections officers to help stimulate both recruitment and retention. Getting these bills enacted is unfortunately moving slow but other states facing similar issues have seen good results with these types of measures.

We've been asking prayers for a long time to help get our volunteers back into the prisons. Getting these staffing shortages resolved is a crucial part of that. We need our leaders to create wise solutions and get them implemented. With one requirement being a safer working environment, that simply cannot be achieved with the existence of staffing shortages. Please keep praying and thank you for doing so.

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- ◆ As outlined in this newsletter, rampant staffing shortages for corrections officers throughout Michigan prisons are causing crises and inhibiting APM from being able to resume the in prison ministry that has been an integral part of what we do for over 40 years now. Please pray that our current leaders can resolve these issues.
- ◆ We routinely ask prayer for our Alpha House residents who face unique challenges as they reintegrate back into society. They continue to do well because of your prayers and support but as also pointed out in this newsletter they can also benefit from prayers for their safety. Just commuting back and forth to work, when they rely on a bicycle, can be dangerous.
- ◆ New volunteers and Board members would be greatly appreciated so it is fitting to make this a prayer request so God can provide the right people.

Prayer Requests

FEBRUARY 2025

Please cut around these prayer requests and use this as a bookmark in your Bible.

Alpha  
Prison Ministries

ADVOCATE

## Bike Trails and Prison Ministry

My wife Sheryl and I both enjoy bike riding which we share in common with our new Executive Director Dave Klooster. For us though, it's for recreational and fitness purposes. Living in West Michigan is a HUGE blessing as we enjoy a heavy concentration of multi use trails all over the area.

We are members of Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, the nations largest trail advocacy organization, which is directly responsible for many trails in the area and well beyond. Their biggest and most ambitious project, called The Great American Rail Trail is 55% complete and when it reaches 100% will provide over 1300 miles of uninterrupted trail between Washington state and D.C.

For the population at large, abandoned rail corridors being taken from decaying and overgrown spaces ravaged by entropy to revitalized public spaces for everyone to enjoy, connects communities, stimulates economic growth, gets people outdoors, and provides non motorized environments to enjoy these benefits safely.

It is on this final point about safety that it directly affects our Alpha House residents. Last year, we had a few incidents of residents being

injured while commuting by bicycle. I personally find it very unsettling to ride roadside even on dedicated bike lanes and even though we use bright front and rear flashing lights to make ourselves easily visible. The problem is the drivers have to be looking and not distracted or texting.

Most former inmates do not get driver's licenses very quickly and many not at all. Bus lines and bicycles are often their only practical means of travel. Both Alpha Houses are within a couple blocks of bus lines and there are nearby trails but those are currently lean. The Interurban Trail has a section that begins just a few blocks from our Hyacinth Alpha House but is useful only for limited destinations.

The Plaster Creek Trail pictured below runs a very good distance in multiple directions so it is potentially viable for commuting within a few miles' radius of our Francis Alpha House but beyond that a quick look at the trail map will reveal it's more ideal for recreational use. In the future, this trail is planned to connect with the Millennium Park trail network which will open up nearly unlimited opportunities for safe bicycle commuting.

You may have never expected that the vast network of trails, both existing and under development, would have such far reaching impact and even help former inmates upon released from prison, but they do.



Photo source: TrailLink.com  
TrailLink is operated by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

Plaster Creek Trail is easily accessible nearby our Francis Street Alpha House

### Easily print this newsletter from our web site

We also offer easy access to an identical version of this newsletter so you can print extra copies. Please feel free to make as many copies as you need. Get it at [alphapm.org](http://alphapm.org).

Newsletter written/edited by APM Board member Steve Chittenden

#### APM Financial Summary January-December 2024

Total Income: **\$114,575.75**

Total Expense: **\$106,738.21**

Net Income: **\$7837.54**



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APM is an **undenominational Christ-centered ministry** to prisoners and ex-offenders