

October 25, 2009

# Geneva BLESSINGS

...And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed. Genesis 12:3

**Welcome to Geneva BLESSINGS!** This new publication is designed to tell the stories of Geneva people blessing the communities around us in the name of Jesus Christ. If you know of someone engaged in the community for Christ, please share his or her name with the church office for future **BLESSINGS**.

## MICRO-GROOMING THE CREATION, ONE BAG OF TRASH AT A TIME

Plastic bag in one hand, weeding tool in the other, Steve Frogue stands outside the Ridge Route railroad and pedestrian tunnels in Lake Forest, surveying the terrain. A small grassy triangle on the west side of the tunnels is dotted with weeds and bits of refuse. Steve bends down to pick up some McDonald's remnants and several beer bottles, then attacks the nearest dandelion. A young woman with a stroller and a black lab walk out of the pedestrian tunnel toward him. "Good morning!" Steve greets them. "Good morning," replies the young woman smiling. The unspoken question floats almost visibly over her head: "What in the world are you are you doing?"



Steve is doing what he calls "micro-grooming." He has been doing it at least three times a week for more than 15 years, ever since he met a man on the Peters Canyon Trail in North Tustin who turned out to be the director of parks and trails in Orange County. "The guy was picking up trash on two trails every day during his lunch hour," Steve recalls. "I thought, 'That's something I'd like to do.'"

His first big project was the Ridge Route tunnels. "No one was taking responsibility for the tunnel area," Steve says. In fact, the trash problem had reached the point where the city was nearly ready to destroy the tunnels, built in 1942, and chop down all the adjacent trees. "Our kids used to walk through those tunnels to elementary school," Steve says.

### Winning the War on Trash Throwers

It took Steve a month and a half to clean up the tunnels. Then there was the matter of ongoing responsibility. After hearing "It's not our trash," from several potentially responsible entities, Steve packed up some big bags of tunnel trash and delivered them personally to Lake Forest City Hall. Things improved after that. The city hired a firm to clean up the tunnel environment regularly. But Steve continues to be actively involved—and committed. "Children shouldn't have to walk through trash," he says. "Trash on the street *becomes* our trash. I'm in a war against trash throwers, and I'm winning!"



Currently, Steve's primary micro-grooming focus is the grounds and parking lot of the El Toro Library, where he weeds, picks up trash, and rakes leaves three or four times a week—in spite of the occasional passer-by who tells him he'll just have to do it all again. "But people go by in cars and give me the 'thumbs-up' sign, too," he adds, "especially at the tunnels."



"The places around us just look so much nicer when they're clean," Steve says. "You can see the grass and trees. I think of this as an extension of my work at Geneva."

Steve and his wife, Carol, are both retired teachers who live in Lake Forest. They are long-time Geneva members. Steve is active in the Rowdies (men's work group). Carol is actively involved with the Iglesia Park Family Resource Center.

## SENDING A MESSAGE OF GOD'S LOVE TO THE UNREACHED

**And when was it that we saw you...in prison and visited you? Matthew 25:39**

*Imagine you're in a very dark place, alone, and cut off from the outside world. You never get a letter. You can't go to church on Sunday. You have no Bible. You really aren't sure whether or not God cares about you at all. After all, you're in jail. Maybe God doesn't like people in jail.*

Through Beacon Prison Ministry, the Geneva prison ministry team reaches out to send a different message to the very dark place that prison is: the story of Christ's love. "Prisoners are hungry for the Word," says Jean Stewart. She and her husband, Bill, conduct a Bible study program for inmates at the Theo Lacy Jail in Orange. "Having an opportunity for any outside contact, especially this contact, makes a difference," Bill adds. "And even a little difference is a big difference for prisoners."

In Bible studies like the one Bill and Jean conduct, prisoners read selected passages from scripture and use a form to answer questions and share their responses to readings. Then they mail their completed forms to prison ministers for review and encouragement. After 15 lessons, they receive a certificate of completion. "The lessons are very basic, almost generic," Jean explains. "But if a person's responses seem to show that he or she has a particular need, we tailor the next lesson to that need."



### Heartfelt Worship and Lifeline Letters

Other Geneva prison ministers conduct two Sunday services for eight prisoners at a time on the fourth Sunday of each month. "It's wonderful to see the prisoners in the services," says Terry Cocking, who heads the prison ministry. "They really throw themselves into worship."



The ministry also offers a pen pal opportunity. Once a month, a prison minister writes a letter to a prisoner, who then writes back. Over time, the correspondents get to know each other, and the ministry relationship grows. For the letter writers, it's a commitment of a few minutes and a few cents a month. For the prisoners, some of whom may not receive even one letter a year, it's a lifeline.

Of course, security is an issue. All prison ministers use only their first names. Correspondence goes only to post office boxes. Team

members' names and addresses are completely confidential.

### The Gift of Light in a Dark Place

For Terry, involvement first came from writing and visiting a jailed friend. Others ministers say the prison ministry has given them a way of reaching out to people they might otherwise never have met, without ever leaving home. For all of the prison ministers, there's the deep satisfaction of passing on the gift of God's Word and the love of Jesus Christ. "What does a gift from the church accomplish here in jail?" writes one Theo Lacy inmate to "his" prison minister. "It brings the light of God into a very dark place."

**Prison ministers pictured: Top box--**Terry Cocking, Barbara McCrory, Jean and Bill Stewart, Nancy Alden, Debby Pearce; **middle box--**Dan Harvey, Rick Lange, Terry Cocking; **lower box--** Dee Leif, Helen and Jim Fisk. **Prison ministers not pictured:** Wayne Burt, Pat Chapman, Randy Cocking (Oceanside), Rico Fontana, Randy LeVan (Laguna Hills Community Church), David Parker, Ruth Tevis.



## COMING EVENTS

November 22: Hanging of the Greens—2 p.m.

December 7: Sing Along Messiah—7 p.m.

December 13: Lessons and Carols—3 p.m.

December 19: Christmas Play—4 p.m.

December 24: Christmas Eve Services—5 p.m. (Family) and 11 p.m. (Candlelight)