



Carmen Ministries' December 2015 Newsletter

New Jersey-based Carmen Ministries is a Christian ministry dedicated to assisting “at-risk” young men. Its mission is to provide every youthful offender the opportunity to hear and respond to the Gospel, to grow in his relationship with Christ, and to become a responsible, contributing adult. Carmen Ministries services young men in state and county juvenile facilities in New Jersey, providing the opportunity to attend weekly Bible Study Sessions and to participate in one-on-one Christian mentoring. Through its work, Carmen Ministries offers encouragement and ongoing support to these young men in their pursuit of continuing education at all levels, removing obstacles as needed, all in the name of Jesus.

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Carmen Ministries is a 501(c)(3) not for profit organization.



A Message from Anthony Wood

Dear Friends of Carmen Ministries,

I want to take this opportunity to thank all those involved in helping Carmen Ministries throughout 2015. It was a challenging year but with the help of volunteers from local churches and the ever present support of my family, we were able to continue to spread His word to so many young men looking for guidance.



Anthony Wood, AKA "Pops" or "Dad" to many of our young men

God has given us countless blessings to keep us going, and He continues to pour out His great love upon our ministry. May God bless us all and keep our hearts always open to His plan. Have a Happy and Blessed Thanksgiving and a very Merry Christmas!

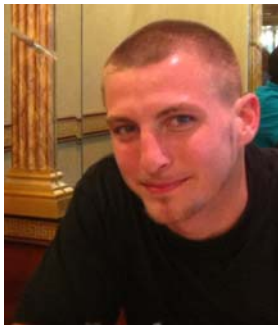
*Yours in Christ, Anthony Wood
CEO and Founder, Carmen Ministries*

"Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock."

1 Peter 5:2-3

Featured Story – Meet David

David is one of the young men mentored by Tony Wood and Carmen Ministries. His story is one of success.



As I was growing up in Asbury Park, NJ in the early '90s, I was one of the few white kids on the streets. This distinction made me stick out, and I received a lot to attention for it. I was picked on and bullied for being the poor, white kid. I wanted to be accepted. Being bullied brought out the anger and bitterness in me; I began to use alcohol and drugs as a way to be accepted. The anger I felt was only fueled by my drinking, I became more aggressive and my behavior was uncontrollable. This downward progression landed me in prison, which became a pivotal point in my life.

Prison was God's way to bring me to His truth. On April 12, 2013, I gave my life to Christ and since then I have been using my past and present life as God's tool. I love to reach out to people and help spread His truth. Being a leader calls for doing and wanting the will of God more than



your own. We cannot serve God with our will in our hands. In order to better myself and be more effective for Jesus, I am focusing on God's deeper plan for me and putting my will in His hands.

I am currently enrolled with the International Christian College and Seminary and actively pursuing my Bachelor's degree. Then I can apply to Princeton Theological Seminary. My goal is to help lead others down the path which He has helped light for me.

I am sending you the grade I received on my first study. It's an A+! This grade is the fruit of your help, and I wanted to show you that I am taking that help very seriously.

Pop, I ask that you pray for me on my journey and I thank you for all your support. To quote Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. "Faith is taking the first step without seeing the whole staircase." I don't know where the staircase of my life is going, but I know that God does.*

*With great love and thanks,
David*

*Mr. Wood, founder of Carmen Ministries, is affectionately called Pop or Dad by many of the young men Mr. Wood mentors.

Tony Named 2015 Volunteer of the Year



Carmen Ministries founder Tony Wood was selected by the Mountainview Correctional Facility as Volunteer of the Year for the 2015. He was honored at the New Jersey Department of Corrections' annual Volunteer Appreciation Ceremony which was held on October 6 at the War Memorial building in Trenton, NJ. It was a true celebration and recognition of Tony's work.

Tony is pictured left with his wife, Rosetta.

"Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms."

1 Peter 4:10

Tru-Motivation Tour

In September 2015 the residents of the Voorhees Residential Group Home were blessed with a visit from Tru-Motivation Tour. The evening was filled with dancing, drama and singing. The following is an excerpt from a note received by one of the performers, Jewel Dean.

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"I just wanted to thank you for opening up your home to us during the Tru-Motivation Tour visit. It is so evident that you have a passion for people and giving them the tools to forgive, free themselves and move forward. I thoroughly enjoyed ministering to the youth, and it probably did more for me than it did for them. It's my prayer that your ministry continues to thrive and favor goes before you in all your endeavors. All God's best!" - Jewel Dean

A Letter From Robert

The following comes from a letter Tony received from one of the young men he mentors.

My dear friend, brother and confidant, Thank you greatly and from the bottom of my heart for all your love, support and encouragement. I received the Bible study lesson from the past week. I also received the copy of The Rhythm of Life and it is EXACTLY what I needed and at precisely the right time! I was caught up in my emotions, and I could not put together a clear thought to save my life. I was in mourning over the loss of a relationship and the loss of my freedom. But I will no longer mourn the loss of something which has ultimately led to my personal freedom. God granted me this time in order to restore my sanity, and I intend to use it in pursuit of "the best version of me." It's all in the Lord's hands – as it has always been. I've been reading Isaiah lately and I came across this scripture which I feel is suited to your work and your efforts.

How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim Peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, "Your God Reigns!"

Listen! Your watchmen lift up their voices; together they shout for joy. When the Lord returns to Zion, they will see it with their own eyes.

Burst into songs of joy together you ruins of Jerusalem; for the Lord has comforted His people, He has redeemed Jerusalem.

Isaiah 52:8-9

Thank you for being one of the Lord's ever vigilant "watchmen" and for instilling within me the hope to do the same. Thank you for leading me to see things "with my own eyes." My reminder to you is that it is we, the "ruins of Jerusalem," that God has chosen to be the watchmen, the proclaimers of Christ, the joyous and the redeemed! I will do my part to spread the Good Word no matter where I go. Thank you and God Bless.

Mentoring for Success

We count many of the young men we mentor as our successes. While we sometimes lose contact with individuals, we pray for their continued success. We were pleased to hear from one man who reached out to us via social media after seeing one of our updates.



Shaun

Shaun was one of the young men formerly mentored by Tony. There had been no contact for 14 years. After finding Tony on Facebook through the Carmen Ministries page, Shaun contacted Tony to say thank you. Not only did Shaun say “Thank you,” but he brought his wife and son to New Jersey to visit Tony and his family in June 2015. Shaun has a good job and a beautiful family. God bless you, Shaun, and your family. We wish you continued success.



Shaun, a former Carmen Ministries mentee, and his family

Lonzo

We also heard from another young man Lonzo, who is currently working and going to school, studying the culinary arts. In August, he began an internship. Lonzo is also volunteering in his church as a chef. He is focused on moving forward and staying out of trouble. God bless you Lonzo; we pray for many blessings in the years ahead.

Excerpts from Letters from Our Young Men

Carmen Ministries mentors and touches the lives of so many young men through its teachings about Christ. These men look to Carmen Ministries for spiritual, emotional and physical support. Below is a representative sampling of the continuing outpouring of pleas for love and thankfulness Carmen Ministries has received.

There is no growth without change; no change without fear or loss; and no loss without pain. I've learned that great souls are grown through struggles and storms and seasons of suffering. Please be patient, God is not finished with me yet.

Thank you for preaching the Word to me and the fellow brothers. It really means the world to me.

I always wanted religion in my life but never felt the power of it until I met you. I'm blessed to have had the chance to meet you. I encourage you to keep reaching out to our prison system and to change the world like you changed me, one person at a time.

I always wanted to belong to a family who would love and cherish me and now I have the spiritual family. I thank God for that. I thank Him for His mercy and love. I want to thank you, Pops, for the letters you send with the advice to help me make it through the hard times. I truly am a blessed child of God.

You have been a wonderful father to a child who is not your own flesh and blood. You are my spiritual father and I thank you.

I'm thankful for having you in my life and for you leading me to the right path. I'm grateful for you teaching me the word of God and for pushing me to be a youth minister. I'm blessed to have met you. GOD BLESS. I LOVE YOU!



I found myself, Pops, and I feel great! I'm ready to be God's servant, a role model, a better father and an inspiration to all my brothers and sisters in Christ. I trust in the Lord so I trust in you. God bless.

Thank you for the books and all the encouraging literature you send. Please continue to keep me in your prayers as I will continue to pray for you as well.

Prayer Requests

Our young men pray:

- for me to make it home next month and that I will get into trade school
- to be successful in life, maintain good behavior and become a positive peer
- for my brothers who are locked up to come home; look over my family and friends to make sure they do right; bring happiness to me
- for family and friends at home to stay safe and healthy and for my friends and family who are locked up
- for my son and my well-being. [My situation was a traumatic one and from that I became a stronger man.]
- for my fellow peers to make it home to their families and for me to make it through life; to be something in life; to help others get through rough times like I am trying to do
- for myself and my peers to stay on the right path
- to get through each and every day; help me get home and back into school; bless me and guide me each day in my decisions and choices
- that I become a positive peer; for me to stay out of trouble; to keep me protected from negativity
- for my mother to stay strong while I am away and for me to stay on the best possible path
- for a job when I leave the program
- to make it in life; for my family and friends; for me not to make the same mistakes that got me here; to make it to college and live my dream to play football
- that I finish the program and stay out of the system





Daily Devotion

The following is an excerpt from a daily devotional written by Pastor Jerry Scott of Faith Discovery Church in Washington, NJ



Tony's ministry is to men in prison and those recently released from incarceration. He is fondly called "Dad" by dozens of these guys. When we talk about the choices (usually involving illegal drugs) that got them tangled up with the legal system, there is another factor common to many, if not most, of these young men – the man who impregnated their mother failed to be a father. They grew up without guidance, without male affection, without the discipline that a loving Dad provides.

It is hard for me to even imagine what life without an engaged and loving father is like. My Dad was always involved, always there, unafraid to show affection, not reluctant to tell me that I needed to shape up! However, I have a second Father whose love is an even more powerful influence in my life. He is a constant Presence, the Source to Whom I turn for daily needs, a Friend for all times and the One from whom I take my identity and purpose in life. Time has only enhanced my love for Him. You can know Him too! Jesus came to bring us home to our Father. *"To all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God – children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God."* (John 1:12-13, NIV) Later John wrote *"How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!"* (1 John 3:1, NIV) Take a few moments to think that over!

Are you living in the love of your Abba (your heavenly Father)? Here's what God says about YOU *"...you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him, "Abba, Father." For his Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God's children. And since we are his children, we are his heirs. In fact, together with Christ we are heirs of God's glory."* (Romans 8:15-17, NLT) He offers us a relationship full of love, where He is not a remote deity, but rather our **"Abba!"** (An Aramaic expression of familiarity. He is our Dad!)

- There is no need to tough it out alone. Reach out to your Father, committing your way to Him, seeking His guidance.
- Do not stumble through life unsure, confused, alone and afraid. Your Father has wisdom for the asking!
- The best affirmation ever comes from the Father who knows you best and loves you most.



*This is my Father's world,
O let me ne'er forget,
And though the wrong seems oft so strong,
God is the Ruler yet.*

*This is my Father's world,
Why should my heart be sad?
The Lord is King, let the heavens ring.
God reigns let the earth be glad.*



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Our Thanks To You

We would like to give a special thanks to those who contributed to Carmen Ministries this year. Carmen Ministries continues to face administrative challenges and obstacles but in spite of these, we are grateful to God for all He has given us.

*"Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ"
Ephesians 5:20*

Support Carmen Ministries

Please consider supporting Carmen Ministries through the Amazon Smile program. Amazon will automatically donate 0.5% of your purchases to Carmen Ministries. Simply select Carmen Ministries in Hackettstown, NJ as your charity.

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