

Seeds of Faithfulness

Dan Swets, Director of Ministry

One day, my father-in-law called me. He told me he had been listening to a radio program where a chaplain was talking about ministry in Cook County Jail and was looking for volunteers. He said, "Dan, you need to do this." I didn't know what to expect, but I went to observe a Bible study at the jail. From the moment it began, I felt the prompting of the Holy Spirit. I knew this was something I was supposed to do.

During that time, a few of the men that I was working with began to talk with others about what I was doing. Eventually, I was invited to lunch with our founders: "If we provide the seed money, would you go into this ministry full-time?" I prayed about it, we met several times, and we all felt peace about moving forward.

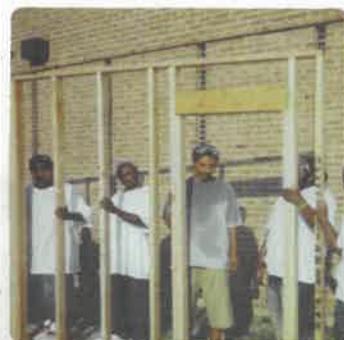
In 1994, Chicagoland Prison Outreach was born.

In CPO's early days, I was going into the jail five days a week, leading Bible studies, doing one-on-one discipleship, and meeting with men who wanted to grow in their faith. From the very beginning, it was all about discipleship. Over time, others joined the work. We added staff and volunteers, began serving in new facilities, and expanded beyond the walls of Cook County. I still look back and marvel at how God multiplied it all. What started with one person has become a movement of many, each one helping others grow in faith.

If I had to sum up CPO's ministry philosophy in two words, it would be faithfulness and intentionality. Over the years, I've learned they go hand in hand: to be faithful, you have to be intentional. And to be intentional, you have to be faithful. Those two words have guided CPO. Whether we're teaching, mentoring, or serving, our goal is to stay faithful to God's call and to do everything with purpose.

My hope for the next 30 years of CPO is simple: stay faithful to the call. I'm grateful beyond words to see Corey carrying that banner so well. I don't worry about the future because I know the mission is in good hands. If Christ took me home tomorrow, nothing would change in the advancement of the kingdom. That's how confident I am in the team God has raised up. The seeds planted long ago are still growing - and they're being replanted every day in new hearts, new facilities, and new families.

Looking back, I never could have imagined how one phone call would lead to this. But God takes small beginnings and grows them into something lasting. CPO's story is proof of that. It's been a joy to watch these seeds of faith grow into a garden of grace - tended by so many hands, watered by prayer, and rooted deeply in God's love.



Seeds of Hope

For over 30 years, Chicagoland Prison Outreach has been sharing God's love with offenders and their families through the Gospel, mentorship, and education. Thanks to the prayers, support and volunteering by countless people, our mission continues to impact hearts and lives into eternity.

Looking ahead, we believe the next five years for CPO are critically important to steward the momentum God has entrusted us with. To that end, our "Seeds of Hope" Five-Year Strategic Plan will focus on the growth and expansion of our three key areas of service: Chaplaincy, Career & Life Development, and Compassionate Care.

This roadmap of deepened growth and expansion includes four main areas that CPO will be focused on: Programs, Operations, Communications and Advancement.

Our vision is to plant, nurture and harvest many "seeds of hope" with you so that He gets all the glory, even as we turn to Him for the growth and flourishing.

Chaplain Growth

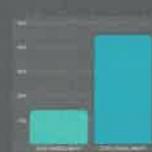


By adding five Chaplains by 2030
we can provide

1,500

Bible studies annually

Career Center Enrollment



By expandin our enrollment to
450 students, we can not only
decrease recitivism rates, but
increase public spending savings.

Volunteer Expansion



By increasing our volunteer
support, CPO programs can grow
exponentially.

Adding Families



By tripling our assistance to
families of those incarcerated,
we can support

540
annually.

Bearing Much Fruit

David Sherwood, Director of Advancement

Since stepping into this role in May, my heart has been filled with gratitude, not only for the amazing work God is doing through CPO, but also for you, our faithful partners who make this ministry possible.

Truly, "The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy" (Psalm 126:3).



At CPO, we take seriously Jesus' command in Matthew 22:36–40 to love God and love our neighbor. For us, our neighbors are men and women who are incarcerated or returning home. Because of your prayers and generosity, they are experiencing God's grace, finding restored hope, renewing their families, and beginning a new life in Christ; spiritually and vocationally.

Already, your support is bearing much fruit. Families are being strengthened, disciples are being made, and men and women are being equipped with both faith and skills for sustainable work. Some of our Career Center alumni are now hiring recent graduates which is a multiplying cycle of transformation. The Kingdom impact is tangible as lives are stepping from darkness into His marvelous light.

This impact is eternal, but it is also deeply practical. Illinois spends nearly \$50,000 each year to incarcerate one individual. Last year, 25 CPO graduates secured union jobs these men and women now contributing to their families, churches, and communities instead of returning to prison. The difference between incarceration costs and what they now generate in earnings and taxes could exceed \$2 million in just one year. Imagine this impact multiplied threefold, that could mean over \$25 million in community benefit by 2030, and far more importantly, countless lives transformed for Christ's Kingdom!

Looking ahead, we believe the Lord is calling us to triple our capacity in the next 3–5 years, multiplying Bible studies, strengthening more families, and equipping even more men and women for lifelong discipleship and meaningful employment.

DIGITAL MARKETING CLASS IN EVANSTON

Thanks to your generosity, something truly inspiring is happening in our Digital Marketing class in Evanston. Justice-involved individuals and their families are now taking bold steps to rebuild their lives and businesses, one lesson at a time.

Each week, our students dive into new skills, from mastering social media platforms and creating uplifting content to harnessing the power of AI to share their unique stories. Just this week, they practiced writing engaging captions, using hashtags to reach wider audiences, and crafting meaningful calls-to-action—real skills that open doors to economic independence and brighter futures.



Your support makes all of this possible. You're helping transform knowledge into opportunity - one post, one business, one life at a time.



A Season of *Giving*

Our Christmas Angels of Hope program is in full swing and our outreach continues to grow every year! At the time of print, we have **164** families signed up to receive gifts, **649** children who will wake up on Christmas morning with three presents, **32** churches and organizations buying, wrapping and delivering gifts, and **countless** volunteers helping to bring the love of God to the families of incarcerated individuals.

We are always looking for churches and organizations to come on board to provide gifts for our families. If you or your group would like to partner with us next year for 2026, please email our office at office@cpoministries.org.

Thank you for your ongoing support of this incredible program! We ask that you continue to pray for the success of this initiative, for the Lord to bless the families we are connecting with, and for a safe and joyous Christmas for everyone who is touched by the Angels of Hope Program. **Merry Christmas!**

YOUR GIFTS AT WORK

Your donation does more than just fund programs - it offers hope to incarcerated men and women, as well as their families. Your generosity enables us to provide critical educational opportunities, vocational training, Bible studies, and discipleship programs that help transform lives.



By cash, check or money order

Send to PO Box 63,
South Holland, IL 60473



By credit or debit online

Visit www.cpoministries.org/donate



Scan me to contribute!

**SEND IN THIS SECTION WITH THE COMPLETED INFORMATION
BELOW IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO BE ADDED TO OUR MAILING
LIST OR RECEIVE ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

Please send me more information on:

- Making a reoccurring gift on a monthly basis.
- Becoming a volunteer or partnering church with CPO.
- Giving stock, real estate or business interests, which may reduce my taxes.
- Giving from my IRA, which reduces my taxes.