



# GANG PREVENTION

## Gang Prevention Information for the Church Newsletter

**M**y name is Sonya Perez and this my story. I was molested as a child and raped in my teen years. No matter what I did or tried to do I always ended up feeling there was no hope for me. I thought I was dumb and that God has just dealt me a bad deck of cards. It was up to me, I thought, to try to make it on my own.



I remember one day in high school when the teacher took out a piece of paper and drew a red line across it. My name was under that line—which meant I was about to fail the class. If I failed, I wouldn't graduate. I remember being so angry. I stormed out of the classroom – again feeling hopeless and helpless.

Then something happened. As I walked away I heard God say to me, “Sonya, it’s not true. There is hope for you, and it comes from me – God.” Well, it took a lot for me to swallow my pride and walk back into that classroom. But that brief encounter with my heavenly Father was the beginning of my new life.

### **I was addicted to just about everything.**

Up to that time I was addicted to guys, drugs, alcohol and non-stop partying. Every time I'd get drunk I hoped I would die. That was my goal. Death. Why not? I didn't have any reason to live. How grateful I am to my living Lord who rescued me from a pit of destruction. But I was afraid I'd disappoint God if I made another commitment to him. I'd prayed the sinner's prayer before and then walked away from Jesus.

That's when I was reminded of Philippians 4:13...I can do all things through God who gives me strength. I realized God was able to do for me what I could never do for myself. I'm happy to say I've been sober now for 10 years. It's only because of God's grace, the leadership and counseling here at Radiant Word of Life and the fellowship of other Christians that I'm no longer in bondage. The truth – God's Truth – has set me free.

### **Your support is vital to our ministry. Thank you.**

I also want to say a word of appreciation to all our friends in the Presbyterian churches in this area. Thank you for your prayers, your encouragement and your financial support of the ministry of Radiant Word of Life. Gang life is a terrible life, and yet that's what we're surrounded with here in Oxnard. But our church continues to reach out to anyone who has ears to hear the saving message of Jesus.

Now as we try to do even more to reach out to younger people to help keep them away from that gang lifestyle we continue to need your support. And what we learn here we want to share with you. I also hope you'll come visit us soon. Come see how your investment in the lives of others is paying eternal dividends.

God bless you for your support. We also want to hear your testimony of how God is working in your life. Until we meet, please accept my thanks and all good wishes from your friends at Radiant Word of Life.

Gratefully,

*Sonya*



**A SPECIAL OFFERING OPPORTUNITY**

**32 CHURCHES can**

**YOU can**

*make a difference*

**save a life**



**GANG  
PREVENTION**

**PLEASE give today**

**Children are victimized by murders & violence.**

- 500 Oxnard youth are in gangs and living without hope.
- Hostilities are the highest for the most vulnerable youth.

**How we are making a difference for God.**

- Ex-gang members are already leading the way.
- Christian mentorship is giving kids a new future.

**SHOW SUPPORT WITH ANY AMOUNT  
give online at [www.sbpres.org](http://www.sbpres.org)**

**32 CHURCHES**

**Santa Barbara Presbytery of Churches**

*God is calling us to help defenseless victims of violence.*

**Your gift is extremely important.**

## GANG PREVENTION

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“I grew up in the gang environment and I pretty much know the gang life. There’s no future in that lifestyle. Even though I was once shot by gang members, I still think that it is important to reach out to them. All they need is somebody who can relate to them, listen to them and be their friend.

Former gang members in the church can reach out to these kids because they can relate. They need somebody to say, ‘Hey, I’ve been there. You don’t need to do that. There is another way.’ This is what God calls us to do.”



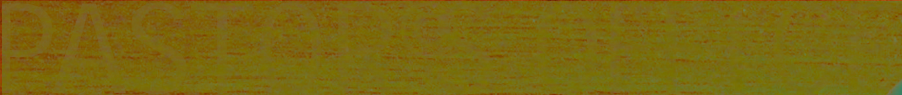
**Rudy Garcia**  
***ACTION FIGURE***

**We are dedicated to implementing practical gang prevention strategies.**

**Donate at [www.sbpres.org](http://www.sbpres.org)**

**For hundreds of youth, your gifts prevent their death or likely incarceration before they reach the age of 23. Thank you for your support**





**IMPORTANT:**  
note from the  
Santa Barbara  
Presbytery

Presbytery of Santa Barbara  
6067 Shirrell Way,  
Santa Barbara, CA 93107



**Dear Pastor,**

**The Santa Barbara Presbytery is requesting your participation in our upcoming special offering. It is a part of our 'no small change' campaign to encourage giving at churches.**

**To support the campaign, we are mailing you a number of helpful resources such as videos for worship and bulletin inserts. These can also be found at [www.sbpres.org](http://www.sbpres.org)**

**This special offering, at a date of your choosing, hopefully in September, is to be used to help fund our gang intervention ministry in Oxnard. Former gang members are ready to become mentors to minister to children at risk. But we need hundreds of dollars now to expand this critical program. Thank you in advance for this outpouring of love by your congregation. The need has never been greater. With your help we will make an enormous impact.**

**Sincerely,**

**Jan Armstrong**



**= no dollar amount is too small**

**= no change towards God is too insignificant**

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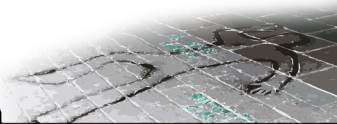
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**GANG  
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**NO SMALL**  
**CHANGE**

**NO SMALL**

**CHANGE**

