



SOMEONE CARES PRISON MINISTRY

Newsletter



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QUIETLY CHANGING LIVES

FEBRUARY, 2010

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**IT IS REALLY TRUE
GOD LOVES YOU.
BECAUSE OF YOU,
SOMEONE CARES.**

Published monthly by
Someone Cares Prison Ministry
P.O. Box 1307
Payson, Arizona 85541
Phone: 928.468.1777
Email: sdapm@someonecares.org
UPS: HC5 Box 49-84
Star Valley, AZ 85541

**DON & YVONNE MCCLURE
FOUNDERS**

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BOUND FOR THE TOP

This is the name of a song I learned as a youth in YMCA Camp, and it's the direction we believe God wants us to take with this Ministry.

The reason we are able to produce this newsletter is due to the growth and great success of this Ministry, all because of the fine job you are all doing. There are many stories we can tell about your willingness to follow through with God's commission as stated in Matthew 25 regarding "visiting" those in prison.

"Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.' Matt. 25: 37-40

THE SYSTEM NEEDS HELP

Due to the world economy and ours, this is the most important newsletter we have

written. Rehabilitation just does not work. Regeneration works and has proven itself, but prison is big business, and therefore little attention is paid to the spiritual needs of inmates. Religions of "All Faiths" in prison are vital, and as you will read later on, we need your help in order to keep bringing Jesus to the prisoners through our Paper Sunshine.

California's prison system is so over-crowded and broken it's being run by a Federal Judge. Michigan and other States have geriatric problems as they've put men, women, boys and girls in prison for a very long time. With an ever increasing elderly population, prison costs have hit a record high. Recidivism (released inmates who return to prison) is out of sight—as high as 70% in some states, meaning 7 out of ten released end up going back to prison.

Yvonne has quoted "Do the crime, do the time" many times, and we both believe in it. But I can speak from my own experience that being locked up only made me worse, and better at what I was doing wrong.

THE START OF SOMEONE CARES

This Ministry began after Jesus accepted me into the Family of God, and this Lion laid down with a Lamb. Although Yvonne's parents were part of the Church foundation my walk was slow. God had the answer, and sent me back to Prison as a Bible teacher!? I learned the Bible as I taught it, and God gave me a talented and cute helpmate through my wife, Yvonne.

Through my experiences while being brought up on the street, I saw the need for "Jesus on the Main Line" in prison. The confusion of Religions was rampant. Chaplain Read one day asked if Yvonne and I would accept full time, unpaid jobs working with him. I said, "In Jesus' name I'll be happy to."

The God Squad was formed, and soon Yvonne and I were full time, unpaid Chaplains of Soledad, the largest prison in the U.S. In California, Michigan and Indiana we spent 14 years working as full time unpaid Chaplains, raising our own salaries. Amen!

All Faiths Chapel. Chaplain Read made Yvonne the Chaplain of South Facility—almost 900 men. As Chaplains we were responsible for the religious beliefs of all faiths. We had worked with enough volunteer groups to see this was going to be a problem—one Chapel of *all* religions!?

Now, how do you get Christian volunteers belonging to many different churches to work together?

During the song services there was unity, but then came the problems that caused confusion among inmates. We understand that God gave us all our own reasons for belonging to a specific Church group. The Bible speaks of doctrinal issues that many disagree on, such as diet, days of the week, eternal salvation, speaking in tongues, and many others. We have always taught, "Do not let your doctrine be a barrier but a bridge to Jesus."

But what about the Muslim, Hindu, Indian, Jewish, Protestant, Catholic? We all agreed that each group should have their own time, and that the Christian faiths should teach about Jesus, having respect for the beliefs of others. After much prayer we had a sign made and hung on the Chapel: "All Faiths Chapel."

The "Gift" of Jesus. I've told the story in the past about how Chaplain Read told me to preach a sermon without using the name of Jesus or Holy Spirit, and that he had to stand up three times to remind me. The fourth time he stood, so did five Muslim brothers. They said, "Let the brother speak—it is the same God in our Koran as Jesus is."

We may not hold the same beliefs, but working in prison

with all faiths we had to talk about God and Jesus in the direction of conversion or growth.

Speaking in tongues is a gift I was not given, but it is a gift! I was once called to a cell block where an inmate had attempted suicide. As we spoke I was a bit confused because I thought he was a Christian. He told me about all the church services he had gone to, but was so confused about the differences in thinking. The latest group singled him out and told him he would go to hell if he did not "learn" to speak in tongues. He spent hours trying to learn, as he did not want to go to hell, but he failed.

I asked, "How do you learn a *gift*?" Then I explained about the gifts of the Spirit.

"There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all ... But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills." I Corinthians 12: 4-6, 11

I also asked where suicide would take him? That volunteer group, which was so set in their ways, did great harm to the inmate by pushing their doctrine (they are no longer teaching in prison).

We do not want to upset or offend any of our faithful

supporters or pen friends, but we must be careful with the religious influence we have on those we communicate with in prison. Let's stay away from our pet doctrines, and instead focus on Jesus and the good news of His loving plan of redemption!

"The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;" Isaiah 61:1

PRISON MINISTRY

It's what we do. "Ministry in prison" is what *you* do. The Lord God needs us both. Our job is to meet the religious needs of the entire prison population, including staff. We helped form the Federation of Christian Officers in one prison. We helped clear the way for the first Indian Sweat Lodge. During Ramadan we supervised so the groups without a free person could hold this high service.

Often gangs will form under the guise of a faith group, and unless staff knows this it can cause a lot of trouble. While Yvonne was working in a women's prison in Michigan, a group sent a racist magazine into the prison. When Yvonne found out that the Warden was going to allow the magazine,

she resigned. Thankfully, the Warden where I was working took my word regarding the nature of the magazine, and refused it and the group from entering his prison. Yvonne then came to work with me. The Chaplains Association in Michigan, through their union, tried to get us fired from our unpaid jobs, as we were a threat to them.

YVONNE'S CORNER

Well, now that you've read about some of the challenges I've faced, you can believe that it took a lot of prayer to set up schedules to try and accommodate everyone's varied faiths with all their different, special Holy Days. But with all of us working together, God worked it out. It brought much more unity to the Chapel. The inmates, staff, and volunteers all noticed how smooth the programs were running.

We all cooperated by setting up for the other volunteer groups that were coming in. I had two inmate clerks, one a Protestant and the other a Muslim, who both participated in helping each of the different groups. We studied in the Bible about how we could each live what we believed and that people would notice our words and deeds, but most of all our love for others. We learned that they will know us by our love, and we sang that song quite

often in the prison Chapel.

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." John 13: 34-35

MISSION PLAN FOR SOMEONE CARES

THE MISSION

Pen Friend Program (aka "Paper Sunshine"). Over the years this program has provided over one million inmates (that we know of) with a completed Bible Study. It has formed life long friendships between free and bound that very often continue after the inmate is released. It has turned many hearts to Christ, including gang members. In one case a pastor's wife was led to Christ by her inmate friend.

THE NEED

More Laborers. Over the years people have offered their help in one form or the other; many offers we did not accept because, *praise the Lord*, our needs were already being met at the time.

But now it is a different story. The time has come, and we admit that we are tired and need help (among other things, I'm having knee surgery soon). We are sorry that we can no longer read all the mail, as

there is just too much. (But we do “spot check” and we encourage you to contact us by phone or email if there are any problems that we miss.)

As we’ve discussed in the past, this Ministry has grown beyond our expectations. If we do not receive the responses for help we are hoping and praying for, we will have to cut back on what we do (i.e., how many inmate applications are accepted, who would be eligible to apply, etc.). However, if laborers step forward to meet this need, the Ministry will continue to grow, reaching more and more people in the name of Jesus.

The good news is, if God wants it done it will be!

THE GOAL

“Pen Friend Charter Groups.” We would like to train couples (or groups, or individuals) across the country to do what we have been doing these past years, so that our forces are duplicated and the heavy burden can be shared among many hands.

The ideal scenario is to divide the U.S. into at least four but ideally six geographic territories, having a Pen Friend Charter Group in each territory, with a couple as the Group

Coordinators, responsible for and overseeing its activities.

The activities include processing inmate applications, soliciting pen friends and matching them with the inmates, reading and distributing the mail, fund raising or finding grant money, etc.

Contact us for more details.

THE PLAN

Training. We would work with the Coordinators to provide them with as much training as possible to run the program, and would be available to answer questions and assist with any problems that may arise, until they are established and ready to work on their own.

Videos. We are currently working on putting together a training video, using footage we already have (thanks to Michelle Johnson) together with instructional information on how Prison Ministry should work. Once the video is ready, it would be provided to those interested in heading up a Pen Friend Charter Group. Getting this video completed is a number one priority for us, but more work is needed and more funds are required to accomplish this.

Workshops. We are also available to come to your Church to provide information and hands-on training if our expenses are taken care of. Or, we can provide training here in Arizona.

WHERE YOU COME IN

Is This Mission Field For YOU? We are looking for those with a heart to serve the Lord in this Ministry. We have so many stories we could tell you about how we’ve been blessed because of our service to Him, and we would love to share more information with you. Prayerfully consider if this is the job for you, and then call or email.

Grants and Funding. We are currently looking for grant money so we can hire some people to help us out. Maybe some of you are aware of resources for grant money—if so, please contact us. Perhaps you are in a position to pledge a large donation, provide on-going monetary assistance, or can name the Ministry in your Will. We need all the help we can get.

Prayers. Don’t stop praying that God’s will be done.

Thanks, with God’s Love
Don & Yvonne