



# SOMEONE CARES PRISON MINISTRY NEWSLETTER



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Quietly Changing Lives

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## DON'T GIVE UP, GIVE IN!



*The following article about us and Someone Cares Prison Ministry  
may appear in Message Magazine.*

I was 36, an alcoholic, a smoker, on drugs, as well as an atheist! My past was on the wild side when I met Yvonne. All of a sudden I found myself in a different world and in love. But to keep this treasured gift I had to change. A pastor friend of Yvonne led me to Christ in two hours. At the end of two hours I fell to my knees a sinner and arose a clean, new born Christian. God took my desire for drugs, alcohol and tobacco instantly away leaving me with no withdrawal symptoms. I was free and clean! I was now a believer in Christ but know very little about the teachings of the Bible or the church. This is where I came from but God had a plan for my life!

One day I suddenly realized I have never experienced a normal childhood like other kids. While other kids had fun learning to skate I was learning to hate, steel and cheat. I know about hookers, zip guns and switchblades. My life was spent in trying to win each bet. My life depended upon being ready for the next person who came to my door. Most often people who came to my door would be packing a gun.

My reason for sharing these pieces of a broken life is so you, the reader, can learn and hopefully understand and not make the same mistakes.

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## PRISON IS ...

...a place here that is going to be like hell for those who don't make Heaven.



When I first went to prison I was prepared. The first thing I got was a shank (prison knife), and then I hooked up with a prison gang. That price was a bit too high to pay so I made it on my own; I was tough enough.

I think back when I first took Yvonne to prison to minister. She really wanted nothing to do with it. But when she saw that in prison there were men who had made a mistake but could be reached, she changed her mind; that was forty years ago. During her training she was told the first thing she had to do was search the Chapel for shanks or any material that could be used for a weapon. She found out very quickly that 99% of the inmates were there to protect her, since they realized that she was there for them. She changed the Chapel to "All Faiths." Even I was amazed to see inmates with all kinds of church backgrounds praying together, studying together and growing together. Yvonne and I had access to all the prison areas without escort, which was very unusual. Although not paid by Church or State we were treated as Staff. Some day I'll tell you about going through the police academy.

## DONT' GIVE UP, GIVE IN - Continued

After giving my life to Jesus I found myself spending hours studying the Bible. Someone gave me a box of cassettes containing the sermons of Pastor Walter Pearson. I learned them well and have preached them all. I worked and studied. I knew God was calling me. I called Chaplain Stanley Reed of Soledad Prison. Soledad is the largest prison in the United States. I told him that I was a new Christian and wanted to teach the Bible to prisoners as God was teaching me. After being a Christian for about six months I was not teaching the Bible at Soledad Prison. Yvonne was reluctant to join me. A few months later Chaplain Reed invited us to become full time volunteer Chaplains. Excitedly we said yes with a big Amen! As a team we become known as the "God Squad." Next, we both were trained at the Police Academy and soon became Staff Chaplains with a salary of \$1.00 a year. Many volunteered their financial support this giving birth to our nonprofit "Someone Cares Prison Ministry." I was ordained and Yvonne was board certified by a Christian organization as ministers of the gospel. One evening at prison, Yvonne was leading her choir when I received a call from Chaplain Reed. He said he was sick and asked me to preach two sermons on Sabbath and two on Sunday. Thanks Pastor Pearson for those cassettes!

There are ministries that to into prison, present their doctrines and leave offering no follow up. This causes much confusion. We have found a better way by offering consistent Bible based teachings followed with questions and answer sessions and if we didn't have the answer we promised to return with the Bible answer. We trained our volunteers to speak about Jesus and the Sabbath, Jesus and the state of the dead, and Jesus and salvation. It was agreed the an "All Faiths Chapel" was needed. We explained this to the inmates and they were pleased. We soon had our chapel where prisoners of all faiths could come and worship.

For many years Yvonne and I went from cell to cell in both Soledad and San Quentin prisons. Up to this time Yvonne was the only woman allowed to walk the yard and cell blocks. For over forty years we served in many of America's major prisons. We started dress out programs for prisoners being released. We enrolled as many churches as we could to collect, clean and size up clothes for both men and women. Many inmates never no visitors so we arranged for members from local churches to visit once a month in the visiting area. One day Yvonne met an inmate in San Quentin who had received no mail in years. This led Yvonne to start the "Pen Friend Program." An inmate hears about the program and fills out an application with a letter and sends it to us. You inquire and we send you the inmates information packet. You respond and address your letter to the inmate using our address and then we forward it on thus protecting your identity. Some choose to use a pen name.

## DONT' GIVE UP, GIVE IN - Continued

Thousands have enrolled and finished our courses provided by the Voice of Prophecy Bible Correspondence School and others. Inmates have also been helped with job placement, continuing education classes, as well as trying to be reunited with their families. This is not always easy and often a real challenge!

In most prisons you will find many Bible study groups teaching all kinds of doctrines as truth, which becomes a real problem. While at Soledad we had a meeting with all volunteers and encouraged them not to allow their doctrines to be a barrier but a bridge to Jesus. One day an inmate by the name of Rocky asked me when I was going to preach and Adventist sermon. I did! It was a message about Jesus! We have preached in many Adventist churches teaching that we must not allow our doctrines to become a barrier but a bridge to Jesus. This plan has been very successful. How can we teach the Sabbath if our listeners don't know the "Lord of the Sabbath?" Early in my walk with Jesus I found the book "Steps To Christ" to make the Bible easier to understand. I have share this book with many.

Please pray for us as we continue to share about Jesus and His wonderful plan for saving all sinners!

Don and Yvonne McClure (The Adventist God Squad)

## YVONNE'S CORNER

Never Give Up! That's the title of a wonderful song written by Chuck Fulmore! It has lifted us up many times over the years. I would like to try to explain to you how little an inmate has. The state issues their clothes which are prison-made and not many. They are forced to stay in a cell 23 hours a day with no radio or TV. Hardcore inmates are not bothered; others are scared to death. Their food is so bad you wouldn't feed it to your dog, and they only have a short time to eat and get out of the mess hall. Luxury to them is a small light bulb, soap that doesn't make your skin break out, shampoo, a pencil, a piece of paper, and an envelope. In order to mail a letter they may give up a meal or two for a stamp. They may ask for money. Five or ten dollars once in awhile is ok, but stay in control, and if you do not want to send any, do not. Gang members often put pressure on weaker inmates for money and make them write free folks. Good news - we now have additional staff, and all letters should again be read by us. We want you to know how important you are to this Ministry, and want to help you in this process. Don't forget, if an inmate bothers you we will provide you with a new one.

## POLITICS



I don't care if we are Republican or Democrat, but what the government is doing is such a shame. The money wasted on incarceration is staggering. Someone's brain storm was to make sentences longer to prevent crime. This did not work, and instead we now have thousands of geriatric inmates and massive medical costs.

When a person goes to prison, the following is what happens in many cases. First of all, they are placed in a prison that could be 500 miles away from where they committed the crime.

Let's say they spend ten years in prison, at a cost of over \$60,000 per year. During that time most have no job, no schooling and no rehabilitation. Most have lost touch with family, or family does not want them, or it is impossible to visit due to the distance. When paroled they must return to the county where the crime was committed. However, they just spent the last ten years receiving no skills or

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## HARD TIME

When the Lord, via a Warden friend, called us to San Quentin it was a real challenge. Yvonne was raised in the Church with Christian parents...was she ready for this? We met with the warden who introduced us to the Chaplain, Harry Howard (now deceased).

Harry knew of our work and training, and assigned us to "C" Section - a terrible place reserved for very hard-core inmates. It was five tiers high with fifty men

to a tier, single celled. The guard opened the door leading to this hell on earth, and when we entered we could feel and smell the tension.

The very first cell housed a man like no other. His hair was to the floor, his beard the same. He heard us at his cell and charged the door. We tried talking with him, but he was having none of that. Once a week for over a year we visited C Section, passing his cell. One day after we had passed him by, the guard came to tell us the bearded man wanted to talk with us. We went back, and I had Yvonne stand behind me. The man said, "I have money and want to buy what you are selling. I've seen many men change and even leave here."

All this went over my head, but Yvonne stepped in front of me and said, "What we have is not for sale - it has been paid for by Jesus." Then, like a mother to a child, Yvonne told him about Jesus. I noticed the gun rail guards had moved behind us. For about sixty minutes Yvonne talked about Jesus. Then a tear came down the man's face into his beard. "Will Jesus take someone like me?" he asked. "Sure," she replied. "Let's pray about it." I moved next to Yvonne and we both took his hands, while behind us we could hear the guns being clipped and aimed. Yvonne prayed, and then in gutter-language that I have heard no other person pray in, he asked Jesus to forgive him. I closed with prayer. One guard told me later, two seconds more and he would have shot someone.

One month later we moved to Paso Robles, but kept in touch with the bearded man, matching him with a Pen Friend and enrolling him in a study. He was moved. Later we were asked to do a Christmas program at San Quentin, where the man had been moved to a new cell block. When we found his cell it was clean and well-ordered, as was the man, who had shaved his beard and cut his hair short. He reached out a hand and we prayed again. We moved to Kentucky, but kept in touch. After thirty-three years he was released to be free in Jesus.

No, we don't like crime or criminals, neither does Jesus. But on the Cross he invited two to go home with Him - one accepted the other did not.



## POLITICS - Cont.

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training, have no money, no job to go to and usually no place to stay. Is it any wonder that when they get out they are desperate and commit another crime?

Then, back to prison they go.

Prison Ministry can be crime prevention. When we started we had re-entry programs to help inmates. We provided clothes and some training. If an inmate comes out of minimum custody and is not violent, re-entry into a group home or ranch would be a good idea. Since it costs so much to house prisoners, one suggestion we made in California to save money was that instead of giving out \$200 release money, they could be given \$1000.00 for staying out of prison for a year. One man named Paul spent eleven years in prison, during which time he did odd jobs and saved \$700.00. When he was released we gave him free clothes, and the State gave him \$100 at the gate and another \$100 when he reported to the parole office. He had no job, no family and was an ex-convict. He built a lean to and spent seven months in it. Finally he landed a job at a car wash and was able to make it. Recidivism (returning to prison) is about 70% because the system does not work. During the Iraq war a friend of ours suggested that the government use thousands of trained, non-violent crime inmates to fight for our country. This is something you might want to talk to your senator about.