SOMEONE CARES PRISON MINISTRY
Quietly Changing Lives

News Letter

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Someone Cares is a faith ministry, supported by God's love and your gifts. It is a non-profit corporation; all donations are tax-deductible.

Don & Yvonne McClure
Directors

SCOPE AND DIRECTION OF CHAPLAINS DON AND YVONNE McCLURE FOR MADISON CORRECTIONAL FACILITY

To provide extensive religious programs for the inmates and staff of Madison Correctional. To attempt to guide volunteers and inmates to a Christ-centered all faiths mode. To train and obtain a rounded volunteer Staff to accomplish this.

To have some kind of religious programming

(a) Preaching

(b) Teaching

(c) Christian Video Seven days a week. So the inmates do have programs we would request all volunteers contact us in the event they cannot make it. If we cannot be con-tacted call the prison and have it announced that planned programs have been canceled.

VISITATION

To recruit Christian volunteers to visit inmates who get no visits, once a month. This will be male-to-male or man-and-woman to male inmate. The Two-Care Program will be similar to the Match Two Program in California. This is to be a support program, not necessarily a religious one.

DRESS OUT

To provide inmates leaving prison with clothes to get their lives started. The clothes will be stored in an as yet to be found church or building.

PEN FRIEND PROGRAM

To provide Christian correspondents with a risk-free letter writing ministry through Someone Cares. It's risk-free because all mail goes through our PO Box and we monitor all inmate mail. See Column 1 for our PO Box phone number, and email addresses to request an application.
PRE-RELEASE AND RE-ENTRY
To the best of our ability we will, working with staff, prepare men for release.

STRESS MANAGEMENT
Inmates and staff have problems that we can assist, especially marriage problems.

CHRISTIAN SUPPLIES
Since Madison Correctional has no budget for Christian programs or chapel programs we will supply all as we can.

WHAT GOD'S LOVE HAS TAUGHT ME
When I first heard about the Someone Cares letter program, I thought "yes here is a simple way to help a person in prison. This will fulfil the prodding of the Holy Spirit inside of me that wanted to help prisoners." But I have come to realize this is more than writing a few letters. I'm not writing a murderer, a rapist, or a drug dealer (many are). I am not writing to a label printed on someone by the Justice System or by the sins they have committed. I am writing to another brother and sister in Christ who made some bad choices, but like myself still needs love (agape), a purpose, something to look forward to, a place to belong. I'm writing to someone like me: a child who has been adopted by God through the love, death and resurrection of Christ, who sometimes does not make the best decisions but still needs to know someone cares.

Michele Tyl

SPECIAL FRIENDS
I am writing this to let you know about a special friend in my life other than God. My Pen Friend, Evola. I thank God you looked at me as human and not as an inmate, and matched us. Not only does she write but she sends stamps. It was and is a pleasure to know Someone Cares.

Rodney

[Before sending anything to an inmate, ask the chaplain or other authority at the prison if they allow the item to be sent. Stamps are used by inmates as currency. And NEVER put stickers on your envelopes! It's a method used to send drugs.]

IS IT LIKE THIS?!
My name is Greg, an inmate. I have been here three years, three months. I've watched inmates jumping and beating other inmates, speaking to us in uncivil ways. Three officers lost their bars for beating inmates, not fired. My life may be in danger for writing this but someone has to know. This is KKK country, and it hurts us all. The general tension is terrible, more than many can bear.

[I know the prison he talks about and many others like it. It is a shame little can be done as too many turn their heads. He sent me the names of the officers and I can pass them on, and pray it helps bring change.]
YVONNE'S CORNER

So often in our newsletters we try to be informative, in some way helping you understand the people we work with, who are no different than you or I. I can honestly say with joy that some of my best friends are in prison. I just received a letter from one of those great friends and would like to share a bit of his letter with you. This is what he writes:

"I feel blessed when I think of others around me who are in search of something that only God can provide them with-which to me seems to be peace of mind. They are searching in the wrong places from the wrong people. They see me and other Christians chatting together and they tend to think we are showing weakness, but it's just the opposite; we are showing strength in refusing to be what we were when we entered prison."

Praise God!! What are we showing in our everyday life?? In prisons all over the United States they have been having prayer vigils for this country; they have also donated blood for the injured in New York and Washington D.C. They are real people, with real feelings, and yes, they did make a bad mistake in their life and that is why they are in prison. Their life has changed. They love God and worship Him, and who among us can cast the first stone?? Join with us.

PRAYER AND REMEMBRANCE

Tonight at prison, as the country did today, we had a chance to bring inmates back to the reality that they were Americans. We told the stories we all heard of reaching out to others. An inmate told me he had just come to check us out and told me he had regained his self respect; would we tell him about Jesus. Others joined in, and the Holy Spirit fell on all.

Because of YOU, Someone does care.

PLEASE CARE FOR SOMEONE CARES

With all our attention riveted to the tube and our hearts going out to those families with missing loved ones, we've evidently neglected to remember Don & Yvonne@Someone Cares. They work without salary and depend on us to sustain them and their work. They're our loved ones, too.

HOT TIP FROM THE MAIL ROOM: NO MAPS!

Once upon a time I bought a pack of paper with a border of publicly available road map segments to use as page 1 of a newsletter, probably a vacation issue. I grabbed a sheet of that to print a letter to my Pen Friend and had it returned to me with a terse little note: "No Maps Allowed at [this facility]."

The letter probably arrived about the time the NYC attack took place. My Pen Friend on Death Row received the same note so he knew I'd goofed. I wrote an apology and sent a new copy of the old page with tulip borders.

Starting this month, the following article is proof positive that God can reach people, via this
ministry, from the darkest parts of a prison and bring them into His light:

THINGS Seldom ARE AS THEY FIRST APPEAR
by Don W. Hawkins

"Rather than curse the darkness, why not light a candle and expose what's in darkness for all to see?"

In doing my part, I shall present a Christian perspective on life from death row. There will be those who will say, "save the Christian moral stuff for church and don't preach morality to me." Every law on the books is based on morality, so in the same tone of ignorance I could say, "don't direct your morality at me by enforcing your death penalty."

Someone has coined a phrase calling Christianity in prisons a "Jailhouse Religion." And because of the human conditioning whereby we are taught to measure and value things, we, as creatures of habit, express a Pavlovian response to things and adopt the negative phrases to satisfy our taught prejudices. In simple words of understanding, we believe things are true because someone in authority says they are. I wonder if someone in the company of the ancient judges of the Bible spoke of the repentance of the Children of Israel in captivity as merely having a "Captivity Religion?" God used captivity throughout the era of judges, kings and prophets of the ancient world to bring about the repentance and restoration of a right relationship between Him and His people.

The mercies of God were always based on grace, not race. Something the Church needs to wake up to is the truth that sin is sin to God no matter where you may be and that He (God) is not a respecter of persons. The mercy and forgiveness of His love is not lessened or reduced just because a person's sin has put him/her in prison under man's laws. God sees the heart of man; sometimes we can't. While our conditioned response is to measure a man by his state or condition in this life, and feel a sense of respect for those in high positions, we consider the social outcasts as lesser beings.

Jesus came as a servant king to teach us the way to the Father's (God's) heart. While violation of our nation's laws is called crime, God sees it only as sin against nature, man and Himself. The human conditioning is to see the transgressors as criminals of the law because of our feelings of disgust at a senseless crime. We've learned to justify our desires for vengeance by calling it "Justice." They are no longer our neighbors, the little boy from down the street; our paper boy; or an accepted member of society; but are "criminals," and not worthy of mercy and forgiveness. I agree that prisoners are not worthy of, nor deserve mercy. If they were, then it would no longer be mercy (unmerited favor), but something owed.

God's will has always been that we love Him first (Deut. 6:5) and love our neighbors as our-selves, not avenging a grudge (revenge) against the children of our people (Lev. 19:18). Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord. We are not the Lord. To love your neighbor as yourself refers to ministering care unto them as you do for yourself, in that you won't let yourself go hungry, thirsty, naked, or home-less. This is expressed in Matt. 25:31-46, where Jesus will separate the goats from the sheep based on this Love. He says that when this Love is given to even one of these, the least of men, then it's being done unto Him. Of course, He's referring to the "least" as an estimation of men of this world. He says to visit (minister care) unto the sick and the prisoner,
those who are dependent upon care from others. How can He say "minister care unto the prisoner," when they've done evil, senseless things to end up in prison? Because while we have prejudices in our judgments by associating the person with the crime and prison, God understands the why of things and sees the spiritual warfare being played out behind the curtain in the controversy between Christ and Satan.

God knows the power of forgiveness and instructs us to be forgiving. If man felt that God would not be forgiving and merciful, then why would he want to change? There is a spirit behind forgiveness and love. For instance, it's easy to steal from or violate a person you feel will only hate you and seek vengeance. But if you knew they would only love and forgive you, it would become almost impossible to violate them. We do not operate in that spirit because we have become conditioned to walk after the flesh and the demands it places on a person's thinking.

How we think in a large part determines how we feel and react. If we think a man is a criminal because, for whatever reason, he has committed a crime, then we will feel a need for enforcing the demands of justice upon him which takes away the ability to express true forgiveness and compassion. Jesus prophesied this would happen. "Because of iniquity (lawlessness), the love of many will wax cold" (Matt. 24:12). In our modern language of understanding, He is saying because of senseless sin, perhaps a rising crime rate, hearts would become hardened and no longer would they feel compassion, understanding, or forgiveness.

Some states may have a "three strikes and you're out" law, but with man's heart being made hard by rampant crime around him, it's one strike and you are "out of feeling" range. While the churches collect billions of dollars in tithe or offerings, the homeless rate has increased and people are being fed and clothed by the state organizations, or independent people with hearts of flesh. There is no more loving your neighbor as yourself, than where the widows are cared for, the fatherless cared for, the hungry, poor and homeless seen as an opportunity to do something for Christ. God's way may not necessarily be a tribe raising a child, but as parents and younger people as brothers and sisters (1 Tim. 5:1,2). There's no love and unity in our societies. There seems to be government and taxpayers financing things they seldom understand the true reality of.

We see only the surface of things and deal with the face value of them, measuring and judging them from conditioned prejudices. An object lesson to illustrate this can be found in something I ran across years ago. There was a church in need of a pastor, so the Elder put out a notice that requested interested men to write out a brief history of themselves so the congregation could vote. One such response came in that said "I am a murderer, I've been in prison several times and hated the Christian faith." Everyone was quick to vote against this man. The Elder turned the paper over and it was signed "Apostle Paul." The media have become a source of our prejudices, because there is no such thing as objective journalism. The sensationalized slant must be captured, because with the conditioned judgments from a hard heart, this is what feeds the appetite of society caught up in the spirit of this world.

At the turn of the century in Pennsylvania, some Quakers tried to use the Quaker philosophies and a forced hard labor system to rehabilitate prisoners. When this failed, they informed the American society that rehabilitation does not work. America accepted this as gospel and turned to punishment as a way of meeting the people's demands for justice. Of course, if Quakerism was a solution for life's many problems the whole world would be Quakers. What they did was assault the men with a system that conflicted with the free-willed spirit of man, causing
rebellion. This was not, in the true sense of the word, rehabilitation. So, punishment became the system of our prisons where retribution was issued in prison sentences. When it became obvious that punishment was not a solution to the crime problem that plagued society, some genius came up with the idea of getting even tougher on crime by giving out even longer prison sentences.

The truth is that you can continue to lock people away with longer sentences until half of America is in prison and the other half are their victims. You can continue to build prisons at taxpayer expense and pay the cost of keeping our children behind bars if you are satisfied with man's solution for crime. There will always be politicians running on a "Get Tough on Crime" platform. They will promise you peace and safety through their solutions, but God said men would cry for peace and safety, but there will be none. People will see these men as deliverers, but peace and safety does not come from man's solutions of judgment and punishment without mercy.

...To be continued...

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What is contagious, infectious, germ-free and can be shared?

For whatever reasons a person commits a crime, he/she is sent to a hostile prison environment. Man's solution is to isolate them from the very society they want them to fit into. These are not "reform" or "correctional" institutions, as they are labeled. They are punishment systems which issue life from a rule book that has no social skill values built into it. These are rules for operating a punishment system only. The hostilities of a punishment prison environment works only to harden the hearts and characters of men and women to be released back into society. So made the worse, they are simply released back into society without rehabilitation, correction, reform or even readjustment.

The conditions for the revolving door are created by the system. It should not be a surprise to see in the news where an ex-con commits a crime. The solution of harder, more expensive prison buildings like Supermax punishment systems do work to make a person not want to return, but do nothing to deal with the social and emotional problems of the person to be released one day. So hardened by the harder prison life and the threat of returning, a person can be moved to committing violence to eliminate the threat of returning. So often the front page news is of an ex-con committing violence.

This system suits a lot of convict types just fine who could care less if changes are made or not. They've learned to do time, which is all that prison teaches. Sure, there are educational programs and vocational trades for some, which is useful in society, but society has no place for the ex-con released from this system, made harder and even less sociable. There are a lot of intelligent criminals behind bars who can match wits with the best minds in society. Education and life skills have a place in society, but not a person with social and emotional problems, which are the cause of criminal activity.

A warden of the Oklahoma State Prison said, on a documentary done by the Discovery Channel on the Supermax H-Unit: "He could not let the prisoners off a 23-24 hour lock-down status, because every time it has been done in the past, someone always does something to jeopardize security." When all you offer them on a non-lock-down status is an assault by a punishment
system, of course you will get rebellion, just as they did at Eastern State, Pennsylvania.

Under a different system, things would be different because there are a lot of decent guards, staff and prisoners. But all are under a rule book, where good guys finish last. If a guard treats the prisoners with dignity and deals with them from a personable, hands-on relationship, he/she will be moved to a guard tower or placed somewhere away from prisoner contact. In fact, the man I am writing this for is a guard. While he would not do anything to jeopardize the security of the prison, he smiles at the human beings locked away in these cells and treats us with a sense of Christian love. Even though a small light as one man, you see a spark as a bright light in total darkness. It's not a matter of forgiving and removing the prison bars. The demands of justice can still be met with prison bars, but let mercy and forgiveness allow for softening hearts to feel and change. Very few men do not want to change and stay out of hostile prison. but the way it is now, it takes even more inner strength to rise above the pressures of the environment and change for the better.

The system actually works against positive change by its hardening conditions. And certainly no guard or staff here wants to create the conditions for a revolving door that threatens society. We're all caught up in the ignorance of it all. Hopefully, I'm not the only person who sees the true reality of things. If I am, then it really must be a blind-leading-the-blind world we live in. I was a non-problem child. My father died, I lost my innocence and eventually found myself before the courts. But the system was set up to punish people and I wasn't old enough to be punished at that time. They were not concerned with the "why" of the changes in me, only with what punishment could be given. The roots were left growing until I was old enough to be punished. Now, having been through the system many times, and having spent over 20 years in maximum security prisons, the cost alone could have sent a whole school of kids to Harvard. We have to pay for our children's future one way or another. Why not get a positive return on your money?

Capital punishment is the ultimate punishment, so in the name of justice we kill to show how wrong killing is. George W. Bush said on the David Letterman Show, "If I thought capital punishment was for vengeance, I'd not support it." It's left entirely up to the District Attorneys to choose against whom they will seek a death penalty. There's not enough money to try every murder as a capital crime and seek the death penalty. It will be sought based on politics or respect of persons. The politics of capital punishment has sucked a lot of decent law makers and law enforcement agents in, where it's carried out in the name of justice, excusing us from personal feelings of hate and vengeance. You can call a cow's tail a leg if you wish, but it does not make it so.

A murder is committed every 21 minutes, yet only a little over 3,500 men and women are on death row in the states that have capital punishment (united, huh!). A District Attorney will seek one person for capital punishment and plea bargain with the others charged with the same crime, of life or less. The ratio used is one hundred to one. It is NOT the most heinous and cruel of crimes chosen, as they would have you believe. Just look and compare the crimes of murderers in general populations to those on death row. It is said to be an eye for an eye system, but if true, then almost all murderers would be on death row, because any crime can be played up by the media to be heinous and cruel.

There is no deterrent factor to capital punishment. Perhaps in some months of an execution, the violent crime rate drops a small percentage, but it does that on non-execution months as well. So, from 15,000 murders committed in execution states, some years only 14,900 are committed and
this drop of 100 constitutes a deterrent factor. It's obvious that capital punishment is vengeance and has absolutely no deterrent factor even though it doubles, and in some cases triples, the cost of life without parole.

God said "life for a life," but not so we'd know how to exact punishment. It was to show the value of human life. Moses killed the Egyptian in anger and hid his body. David committed adultery and murder, yet God did not take their lives. Adultery, along with other sins, was listed as a capital offense, yet when the woman caught in adultery was brought to Jesus, He showed mercy as God did toward people.

If the law was given to teach us how to exact punishment, neither God nor Jesus kept it that way. So, can we then say it's the will of God for us to avenge a grudge against the children of our people and kill them in the name of justice because these are the few the D.A. chose for us? We might want to read James 2:8-13. This brother of Jesus is clear to point out that if you judge without mercy, you will be judged without mercy, because mercy rejoiceth against judgment (2:13). Jesus says, "Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy (Matt. 5:7).

Why not just admit capital punishment is vengeance and not a solution to the violent crime problem? If you truly care about society, you'll accept the reality of things and work toward a solution. If punishment with the death penalty as the chief of punishments works to bring about peace and safety for society, just remember the proof is in the fruit it bears. Why not open your eyes to the true reality and work together for solutions and change?

God forbid that you would listen to a death row prisoner. I'm not saying, "woe is me." I prefer execution over life in this system. And I can survive the hardest of punishment prison environments. I'm merely handing off a candle so you can see what's hidden in darkness. I won't ever be a member of society again, but am mature enough now to care, so I write from a heart of flesh, sensitive to life around me. I've seen almost 40 men walk into the execution chamber, never to return. I listen to the feelings of the victims' families and try to understand their pain. They have a right to their feelings as individuals, but for Oklahomans to excuse their appetite for vengeance and feelings of unforgiveness in the name of justice, is not the will of God, or the heart of Jesus Christ. I hear a lot of ignorance being spoken by so-called leaders of the government and churches. You are all part of the problem and need to obey God rather than man. God's will does bring about peace and safety.

Why not deal with social, emotional problems (moral decay) and fix the hearts of all? Bring in industry and pay normal wages to prisoners. You will not find in the Bible anywhere, where a literal eye or tooth had to be given. The "eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth, life for a life," was a value system. God said, "Do justice, but love mercy." So have the person in prison pay the victim as prescribed by the Bible, whether it is three-fold or a hundred-fold. Make them support their families and pay for their leisures in prison. Teach responsibility and values to them. Deal with their social, emotional problems where they can be accepted and embraced by society. It's a human problem, not a criminal problem, even though we have learned to label it as such. Have them mentor a troubled teen (except for sex offenders). Why not read in the newspaper, "Ex-Con Becomes President of Big Brothers (or Ford Motor Company):" Use the profits from the industry for feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, programs for widows and the fatherless dependent upon the care from others. Do you think it was a broken record for God and Jesus Christ to repeat themselves over and over again about the widows, fatherless, poor, and loving your neighbor, let alone feel any sense of concern for them?
Why not every one of us do our part and learn to love again and care for our children as society's family, where they won't need to steal, or seek destructive paths? Prisoners didn't create crime. It begins out there, most often learned from TV and peers. Teach our children responsibility, value of humans, and the law of cause and effect from our choices. They do not go into the world to experience life so they can find themselves. They become what they make of themselves and it begins with choices they make today.

The same goes for society. Every choice we make, bad or good, has cause and effect attached to it. I think freedom and democracy is taken too far if it destroys the future of people and country. Even if you choose not to believe in God, believe in the good that comes from those who do.

Better that our children carry a Bible than a gun or drugs to school. Better that people go to church than to jail for tax dollars to finance.

"Woe unto them that call good, "evil," and evil, "good."

Don W. Hawkins
June 2001

Someone Cares Home Page