HAPPY NEW YEAR!!

We at Someone Cares extend to all of you a Happy and prosperous New Year filled with happiness, love and joy. As we do every year, we pray this will be the year that Jesus returns, and that we are all ready. This world is not our home; we are just passing through.

REFLECTIONS OF 2003

Someone Cares went into a higher gear, and even though Satan threw a lot at us, we prospered. We finished the year in the black and thank many, especially you. We put the Two Care program into action, and thanks to some generous support, we have 47 inmates being visited once a month by Someone who Cares.

We wish to thank Bob & Debbie, C.V. Thomas, L & M Humphrey, & Jarran Stratton. The computer crash, a very low moment in our ministry, became a blessing. We were forced to put the pieces together and came out way ahead. We added many names that we had lost and most added became active again. God is so good. We did last month’s newsletter out of three files, now combined; so if you got more than one newsletter, please share it. We added over two thousand inmates to our Pen Friend program, of which 1200 were enrolled in Bible studies.

FROM CALIFORNIA

I was really shocked to receive a newsletter and a form I filled out for you many years ago. Like many in hard times. I thought you must have shut down. [Never!] I had quit writing the inmate assigned, but saw that his release date was 2006 and wrote, and we were both blessed. I also saw my pledge to be a Faith Partner 1st check enclosed. Also please send me another inmates name.

FROM KENTUCKY

We knew you had moved to Michigan and when we stopped receiving the newsletter we decided to get a PO Box and still write Amos. Getting your note and
new newsletter was a real blessing. We also noticed a very professional newsletter—no mistakes. [Thanks, Jean]

Please send us a new name and find a donation enclosed.

FROM MICHIGAN

I sprained my ankle and stayed home from work. I had enjoyed being part of your ministry, then did not hear from you. I missed my writing in-mates. I went on the Internet and found your web page. A bit confused as to why I had not heard from you, so I Emailed you. No sooner had I done that and my wife bought me the mail, with a newsletter from you. Sure are glad we are all together again.

Please send us a couple of names.

FROM OUR HEARTS

When God chose us for this ministry we never dreamed it was forever. I was a baby Christian married to a Pastor’s daughter. I joined a church, not knowing what to do or how to do it. But God’s word led me, along with a few very special folks like Jim Finn, Larry Engels, Willard Regester, Lee Grady, and all of you.

We added more names by speaking in churches, then the idea of a newsletter was born. We started growing. Then Dan Mathews, and soon The Voice Of Prophecy took an interest in us. God took the wheel and we happily sat in the back seat for the trip of our lives.

One prisoner, then two, then a bunch. Today we believe the Pen Friend Program reaches into every prison in the United States.

We added a Dress Out Program, providing inmates with free street clothes when they were released. We were again blessed. Our “marriage” with Voice Of Prophecy, and connections with It Is Written, Breath Of Life. Amazing Facts, Home Study, The Quiet Hour, Focus on the Family and many others will very soon total one Million Inmates completing a Bible Study course. What a neat form of love! Working together, we can do so much more to finish a job we all need to be a part of.

WITH REGRET

Due to the massive growth of The Pen Friend Program (“Paper Sunshine”) and getting a bit older, we have to make some changes.

The Dress Out Program, at least for awhile, is being cut. Our goal is to make it a separate ministry at a later date. If you or your church are interested in starting such a program, please contact us. Some time this year Yvonne and I are going to make a Video on all God has had us doing for and with Him through this Ministry.
Thousands of inmates have left prison in free used clothes donated through Someone Cares.

START OFF WITH A BANG

We very prayerfully ask each of you who has ever donated as a Faith Partner, to equal your last year’s donation and pray that God grants the increase.

Betty writes: “I started off with Someone Cares a long time ago and Pledged $1.50 a month. That grew to $10.00 a month last year and now it will be $11.00 a month this year.” We have been a “Widows Mite” ministry for a long time. A few special folks give more, and with these donations we build special programs. A dollar a month to $300.00 a month all is put to Gods use. Receipts will be out the end of January or the first week in February. Please check receipts closely to make sure the amount is right. This is one area of our “late computer’s” crash we are not sure we were able to rebuild properly. As soon as our new program is done... any volunteers?

We will be able to see at a glance who’s assigned to whom, who wrote last and when. Donations will also be updated so we can see them at a glance and inform those who need it. We are going into 2004 with a small reserve. We prayer-fully ask each of you to make a small sacrificial donation to build the reserve. It will cost about $2500.00 to do a Prison Ministry Video. It will cost around $3,000.00 to put ads in Christian magazines to get free folks writing to inmates. Almost all Prison Ministries are giving out our address for Pen Pals. We received almost a thousand requests for Pen Friends in November & December. We just could not match them all, but wrote each and said “soon and very soon.”

PAPER SUNSHINE

As we have said before, we never knew this would get so large. It is a great ministry that does a good job. A saying used in prison a lot: “If it’s not broke, don’t fix it.” Here are some areas that we need to update you on. The Pen Friend program is your ministry, you are writing the inmate or inmates, not Someone Cares. Except on the envelope mailing your letter to us to re-mail, use only your name or Pen Name. Seal envelopes to inmates. We do not read your letter to them. Make sure the inmate’s number is on all letters to them. With the computer crash and Christmas, a lot of mail was sent on without us reading it--please forgive us, When the new program is finished, it will flow much faster. Do not send anything to the inmate unless you are sure they can receive it. If you need to know the policy of the prison write the Chaplain % their address. Do not put stickers on mail to inmates!! It will be returned and we have to pay to re-send it. If you have problems, share them with us; the inmates have enough of their own. If you use a Pen Name please be sure we know it. In fact, send me your name, address and pen name on a card. Try to write once a month even if they do not answer. Keep a card file on when you wrote and when they wrote and what you covered. Religion is being removed from many
prisons so you may be the only door to Jesus. Our job is to lead men and women to Christ, or help them grow. Our job is not the doctrines of the church.

JESUS ON THE MAIN LINE

This is a song we sing in prison meaning what it says. A great deal of our time in this coming year will be re-opening prisons where religion is not wanted. Regeneration that really does work is being done away with. Rehabilitation was done away with a long time ago. There is a need for prisons. But when you build more prisons than schools, something is wrong. Prison today is very big business and the states want to keep it profitable. In some areas, Christian volunteers are being removed. A Chaplain CANNOT run a prison without them. A large prison I know of, the Chaplain has a religious budget of less than $3,000 a YEAR! Chapel doors are locked, but so are many of our churches. Some areas have turned Chapels into dorms to house inmates. I would like to honor a man, Chaplain Harry Howard, the former Chaplain of San Quentin. This godly man and his wife, who has started a journey toward heaven, brought Jesus to the Main Line. From morning to night, volunteers were going cell to cell. Yvonne and I had the pleasure of training under this fine Christian. A couple hundred miles away was Soledad, with Chaplin Stan Reed, another warrior for Jesus. We started in a prison where religious services or the Chapel was open almost always. Over the years we have seen some of the coldest, hardest men come to Jesus. One of the advantages we have is that we keep in touch and see these hard-core men come into society and like a lion, lie down with the lambs. No we don’t like crime and we don’t like the criminal; but with the Love of Jesus, we love them. With elections coming up all over the U.S., be cautious of bills with prison attachments. Pray also that more Chaplains in prisons are given more of a chance to minister to men and women and not be forced to be cops. We invite you who have written and/or visited inmates, to share the experience so we can share with all of you.

We ask that each month, when you finish with the news-letter, share it with a friend at church. As Christian Soldiers we need to be marching to Zion. We need to serve a risen Savior. One of our board members started an Aaron and Hur club to hold up one another as these ancient men did.

JAKE’S CORNER

I start the new year with my father in prison. Here’s what the New Year means to me. I am lucky to live in a Christian home and go to a Christian school. There are a lot a lot of people that did not have a place to stay during Christmas and do not have a lot of people to celebrate with and do not get gifts. We were very fortunate to have what we have and to have family to celebrate with. My father was alone, as we were not able to see him at Christmas.

So please pray for my father and pray for him to have a good New Year even though he stays in his cell 22 hours a day. I know he again studies his Bible, as I do. I was able to save my money and purchase a money order to send him.
NEWEST MEMBER OF THE GOD SQUAD

If Jesus tarries, Jake will take over this ministry someday. He is nine now, so we will train him well. Please do pray for this young man as he really needs it. He sings just before I preach and it really gets me going, and growing.

YVONNE’S CORNER

It is always nice to add new ideas and we welcome Jake’s Corner. We also want to extend a special welcome for those of you who have rejoined us through the mass confusion of a computer crash. I’m thankful that is behind us and we are starting a New Year! We very seldom make New Year Resolutions, as they always sound good but how many times, when you get to the next year, can you take that list from the previous year and check them all off saying to yourself, I did them all. I have never been able to do that, so a few years ago I decided that I would just pray to God to lead us and the ministry in the way He would have us go and I must say it is much easier to follow Him on a day to day basis. No more New Year’s Resolutions for this house; we choose to focus on Jesus every day of our lives and do what He wills us to do. It is so good to have Jean’s Jottings back with us again. She was definitely missed, and still keep her in your prayers. May God bless all of you in this New Year!

I’M IN

I heard you both speak on VOP a few years ago when I first became a Christian. After listening, I raised my hand “I’m in.” You matched me with a woman and we wrote each other off and on. She ended up teaching me so much about the Bible. But our letters got further apart and we lost touch.

Last Tuesday I was reading a book. The topic for the day: prisoners, and how God on the cross used a prisoner next to Him to show true mercy. This started me thinking about your ministry. I asked God to give me a sign if he wanted me to start up again. The next morning I woke up early and turned on VOP which I had not listened to in awhile, and there you were, Don, speaking again.

When I got home your newsletter had arrived with a hand written note saying, “Please re-join us,” like God was saying, “Need any more nudges?” Please, again, match me with a female and thank you both so very much.

IT WAS A MIRACLE

I was an inmate at Soledad and not doing well at all. In fact, suicide was really on my mind. I decided to see the Chaplain and got a pass to the Chapel. There I met you, Don, and a change in my life was about to happen. I was able to dump all my fears on you and you took them right to God.

I met with you almost daily for a couple of weeks, then I got in trouble and rolled...
up to F wing. It seemed like I no sooner got checked in than you were at my cell door. That friendship and seed planting went a long way. A couple of years later I got transferred to another prison and parting with you and Yvonne was tough. I went to CMC, then was transferred to Avenal. As I got off the bus I heard a female voice say, “Hi, Tony!” It was Yvonne. Well, Bible Studies, Pen Friends and time really changed me. I was transferred again and then heard you had gone to Kentucky. But at Christmas I got a card from you. More years and finally released.

I was home sick, from my great job, and got on the computer. As I surfed the net, I found your web page and called. I want to thank you both for being there for us. We could never figure out how all these years, never getting paid, you worked so hard for us. Yvonne explained Faith Ministry, and I sure wish I had what you two have. Here I am, though, use me if you can.

Tony Gonzales.

JEAN’S JOTTINGS

What a wonderful month so far! By the time you receive this newsletter, I should be healed and digging into things neglected for three months. Repeating progress is a fruitless endeavor, right? So much for housework! J Seriously, I’ve certainly been blessed by your prayers and get-well cards. Neat surprise!

I am so impressed with Jake and his insightful new column on what it means for someone his age to have a parent in prison, and know the pain of separation. He’s very articulate for his age, and I’m certainly looking forward to more of his sharing with us from his perspective.

Don usually has to send me a couple more stories to complete the newsletter, and he saves the best for last. It’s so encouraging to have inmates, inside and freed, tell what God has accomplished in their lives through Someone Cares. I still believe that those who minister receive more blessings than the folks we minister to. May you have a safe and blessed new year. Keep that Paper Sunshine coming.