I'M HAPPY TODAY

Thank you for all you do. My thoughts and prayers are with you. My Pen Friend is a strong brother in the Lord. His parents have forsaken him and he no longer has communication with his ex-wife, cutting him off from his daughters. [This is common] He could use your prayers. His name is Paul.

Larry & Ann.

Just a few dollars to help pay for stamps [much needed]. Thanks for getting me involved back in your ministry. I have a prisoner who really is interested in finding out about God. It blesses me to have the privilege to share God and my life with him. Thanks for bringing me back.

Love, Marie P.

I would like you to send me ten more names to write, and for you a prayer: Father, I thank you for the opportunity given us to help inmates through Godly people. Help Don & Yvonne to find those willing to write the massive backlog of inmates. Thank you for providing temporal needs as well as spiritual. Bless these folks a hundredfold. Thank you for using us to increase the fruits of Your righteousness, in Jesus name.

THE SNOWBALL ROLLS,

The snowball grows. When I listened to you and Yvonne on VOP I was excited, as I had begged God to show me a way to serve him. A member of a small, not very active church, I was wandering. I called, and two days later received a packet. I carefully read it all and wrote, thinking of how I was going to help someone grow.

George, my friend, was a very good Christian. He picked up the gauntlet and threw it my way. His letter was so spiritual and directional I was a bit scared. Several of the questions he asked I could not handle. I called my Pastor and he came over. He was amazed that a convict could have this kind of knowledge. My Pastor has his own friend now, so do a dozen members of my church.

What a Joy Divine!

Janet
CELEBRATE WITH ME.

The doctor says my heart is fine. Blood work: perfect. I’m 62, writes Mary. God healed me from a total stroke and a broken foot. Doc says I’m now healthier than he is. Send me two more Pen Friends. This has been a great experience for me. Thanks for all you do for us.

Again, we get the credit for what you do.

CHALLENGE AND JOY

May God bless you and Yvonne & Jean, and may your needs be met. When I received my first Pen Friend it not only opened up a whole new world to me, It helped me learn to lead people to Christ. I’d been a Christian only a year but writing the witness gave me the courage. That was 1992. All but one of the 18 I have written learned of Jesus. Two were executed and several finished their time and we still write.

I write through my church and several write me directly. I pray I can become a steady supporter soon.

Betty

MY MOM IS INTERESTED

What a wonderful ministry for someone such as I, who am not outspoken. My mom sees how excited I am and how soon I answer my letter. I never thought I would be able to share with a total stranger. Thanks so much for this. Mom wants to be a part.

Suzanne

NO RESTRICTIONS

We allow any inmate requesting a Pen Friend to receive one. Many of these men and women request one for all the wrong reasons. Included are murderers, rapists, and child abusers. There is a place in God’s plan for all; we just have to be cautious. More often than ever, we write men and break some matches, or try writing them ourselves.

Jim & Cindy write: We have a dilemma. One of the inmates has not written anything inappropriate, but we are uneasy in our spirit about writing him. We have become friends with our other Pen Friends. We are returning the paper work so you might find someone else.

Don’s reply: I want to compliment Jim & Cindy.

(a) they kept a file and the paperwork
(b) they tried.
(c) they were concerned that someone else might help and returned all.

In the last year we matched 88 folks who were unsuccessful with inmates. 43 wrote one letter and got no answer, so they quit without telling us or returning the paperwork. 23 never wrote, or responded to us by returning paper work. 22 returned the paperwork with no explanation.
Jim wrote: Don, I have tried two Pen Friends and all they want is money or stuff not in my budget. I will support, but this may not be for me.

I rematched both men and so far their new friends handled matters differently. We rematched Jim with someone we knew, and all is well.

**STARS IN WHOSE CROWN?**

Esther writes: I can’t imagine the amount of stars in your crown. All we need is to be there. You do such a vast evangelistic work. I’m writing to ask if you can send the newsletter to my Pen Friend.

We just cannot—too many of them. You can send your copy or print it off our web site.

**LIVING WILL**

We have been contacted by several of you regarding putting this ministry in your wills. We thank you. We also have been put into several where no one informed us or the conferences where we are. Please, if you do this, make sure you tell us, the Conference, the next of kin, or other relative. Also, seeing what we have seen in the news lately, make sure your entire wishes are included. Our treasurer says to detail how you wish the funds to be used.

**CALIFORNIA**

The invitations were extended and we prayed. If someone has a home we can use until Jesus takes us home, fine. If not, we will stay here.

Folks, when you must spend quality time raising funds, moving to California is just too expensive!! Many doors are open there, but God is still in control. Prophecy is being fulfilled as we write this. Even if we got a different home, Yvonne says “Who will pack? I’m staying here. 57 moves is enough!”

God has to call her directly for her to face another move.

**A VERY GOOD REASON**

Many years ago we attached our ministry to an organization called M2 (Match two). Yvonne opened the first M2 office inside a prison at Soledad. This more than successful program matched men with men, women with women, or couples with either. It really worked. It gave inmates a visit once a month.

Thousands of inmates found a better way of life and many found the Lord. Like all things that work, the program folded. We have started the Two Care Program, but on a very minor basis. This also got many churches involved with prisons.

Russell writes: “I saw your program on 3ABN. I would like to get involved. Until it folded several years ago, I was involved with M2. This, of course, was a California Program. Could we
NEW HOPE PRISON MINISTRY

We received the ten names you sent our ministry. We are working our ministry just like Pat and Gary do with you in Florida. My involvement in prison ministry began when I heard you on VOP in 2001. I called Don and he sent me five names. In 2002 I began my own ministry, which a year ago was approved by my Church Board.

Tina Martin

INMATE DECEASED

I was shocked when I got my letter back. Kenneth was a strong believer in his convictions regarding Jesus. I had been so busy with my own prison ministry writing inmates, I lost track. I was writing and getting no answer. I do thank you for introducing me to prison ministry.

A brief note: Don’t get so involved you miss what is going, or not going, by.

Imnier

BOY, AM I EMBARRASSED!

I got a packet from you of the inmates you assigned me. Also a note asking if I was writing. I also got several nudges asking if I was writing folks.

Yes. Not only am I/we/us writing, but we have started our own ministry and Pen Friend Program. We started with the names you sent us and we decided to write direct. (Oops! I did not tell you.) There are six in our church now writing to 46 inmates!!. Your seed planting here in California has really gone a long way.

Jackie and team.

OUR HEARTS ARE AGLOW

Putting bits and pieces together, there seem to be about 38 prison ministries started through the Pen Friend Program that we know about. I was going through new records, old records, trying to up-date data. To say we are shocked is an understatement. We now ask for your help.

HOW ARE YOU LABELED?

Please look at the address label this came in.

1. When we match you to write, we put a (w) on the label. This also means we think you are writing.
2. If you send a donation we put a (d)
3. If your label has a (p) that means you did write at one time; will you try again? 4. An (f) means that at one time you donated. Might you again?
5. A few names have (wr), which means we sent a name and you never responded or we goofed. A number on the label is how your donations are recorded.

SOMEONE CARES FROM THE INSIDE

I know that some of you send your Someone Cares Newsletter to your Pen Friends. If not, perhaps you’ll consider sharing this one. As Christians, we all pray and believe in Someone. That someone is Jesus. Many of you are familiar with the phrase “You’re the only Jesus some people may ever know”. As I grow in my faith I’m led to reach out to my fellow prisoners, Many of you who write to us, the prisoners, are doing likewise. It’s wonderful to be working for wages that will last forever.

I just wanted to encourage everyone with a lesson I’ve learned. Paul in Colossians 1:27, speaks of the “Mystery” of the Gospel, which is Christ in you.

In Isaiah 55:10-11, God promises that His Word shall not return to Him void.

As we reach out to others, don’t forget that they are Babes in Christ. Babies stumble and fall, so always pray first and think about Friendship Evan-gelism. It is true what they say, “People don’t care about what you know until they know how much you care.” In your letters to each other, let the Holy Spirit do the work. It’s not our job to “win” someone to Jesus, our job is to love, Jesus will do the rest. I’m learning to let God do the impossible, after all, with God, nothing will be impossible. Luke 1:37

YVONNE’S CORNER

Spring is in the air and even some of the bulbs are in blossom, what a beautiful time of the year. We had a hard winter with snow and all, so spring is just a breath of fresh air. But as I enjoy spring I think of vacations and summer, and wonder if I tend to get too laid back and might forget to be the Christian I should be.

When I should be studying the word and sharing more with others, it seems like the devil says “Oh take it easy. Work in the yard today, don’t worry about sharing. Well, that sounds good, but I need to be strong and say, “Get thee behind me Satan,” and be the warrior I should be for Jesus. So I ask all of you to keep writing, and studying, and fellowship is important, Let’s keep it together this summer and have a good time while we serve Christ, Please keep us in your prayers, as we will each of you.

JEAN’S JOTTINGS

Ah, Spring! I’m with Yvonne when the air begins to turn warmer after a long, dreary, gray, bone-grinding, depressing winter! Can you tell I’d never be a good citizen of the state of Alaska? It’s no wonder Seasonal Affective Disorder takes such a toll, even with full-spectrum lights.

One bright spot in the prison ministry we serve, is the profusion of flowers and bulbs that have been nurtured in the greenhouses, and are now planted in the well-tilled beds on the campus.
Some are already in bloom, bringing cheer to everyone who passes them.

Soon the lush gardens will be producing dinner plate-sized hibiscus blooms and a big variety of veggies. A faithful inmate also keeps things looking nice by sitting Indian-style on the sidewalk, carefully picking spent paper matches out of the stones that line the walks.

By the time you’re reading this newsletter, Shirley and I will have enjoyed our fourth Volunteer Appreciation Banquet. The facility provides this each year to thank us for our service to the inmates.

We’d serve them whether we were thanked or not, but it’s a lovely, warm-fuzzy time to get acquainted with new volunteers, and renewal with old friends. It’s lovely to be told by those we serve how much we mean to them, just by faithfully being there.

To become a Religious Volunteer in a facility that provides for it, you need to apply at the prison and go through the training program provided. Try to have another, (or several people from your church), take the training with you so pairs of you can cover different weeks of the month. Some people are really skeptical about going in among “bad people,” but you will discover that these are folks just like us — they just messed up along their life’s journey and need to go to church while they’re locked up.

Be prepared to comply with the rules:

1. You will have no outside contact with the inmates; such as letters or allowing them to call you.

2. When you check in at the prison, you must put the contents of your pockets in one of the lockers provided. As a Religious Volunteer, you will sign the volunteer/pastoral visitor log at the desk, and you may carry in only your locker key, a pen or pencil, your ID, Bible, and some study materials for the day. Shirley finds wonderful handouts on the Internet, for the men to keep, and sometimes there’s enough for them to have an extra copy to share with others. It may take a few weeks to get all the rules straight, but the Chaplain or staff will help you.

3. A cooperative attitude will get you everywhere! The guards are in prison, too, so treat them always with cheerful cooperation and respect, and you’ll find them very helpful.

4. Keep in mind that under a gruff, tough crusty exterior often lies a marshmallow that no one is supposed to discover. Jesus loves them, too.

5. Ladies, dress modestly! Yvonne and our Chaplains counsel us to wear a pant suit and low-heeled walking shoes. Riots are rare but we cannot risk our lives and those of the guards by mincing around in stilettos. Besides, it can be a l-o-n-g hike to the chapel.

6. As religious volunteers, we may greet inmates as we meet on the way to Chapel, but are not allowed to invite them to our services. Encourage your inmates to be missionaries by inviting cell mates and friends to the services. There are men and women in prison who admit they belong there, and those who are wrongly accused. God knows their hearts, and sometimes He uses them to great advantage to bring a harvest of souls to Him.
7. Our chapel has lockers for the different faiths, and we are able to furnish books, tracts and hymnals via the Chaplain. Our guys love to sing! One is especially blessed with a good voice, and the last time we were there, we six just filled the room with praise, helped along by our angels. There are times when their presence is tangible!

8. Arrange for new arrivals to sign up for Bible Studies. We have a local lady who grades and returns the lessons

You WILL receive much more than you give!

Someone Cares Home Page