### SOMEONE CARES PRISON MINISTRY

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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.

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**Directors**

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### WAY BACK WHEN

The Lord, through a series of events, had us start the Pen Friend Program. No way could we dream it would become so massive. Awhile ago I finished matching one hundred fifty one (151) inmates. All in one days work.

When these inmates get a Pen Friend, they will tell their friends, and we will get more requests. We wish all the free folks would get others to do the writing.

This newsletter will deal with many a problem and prayerfully get some of them cleared up.

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### STICKERS ON ENVELOPES

Last month we had 111 letters returned because they had stickers, with or without smiley faces on the envelopes. This is a way inmates use to smuggle drugs into prison on the glue. No stickers, PLEASE!!!

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### PAPER SUNSHINE...

...that has clouds on it: When we assign a Pen Friend to free people, it is you, not we, who are writing. Next to me is a stack of mail from inmates, 53 in all, addressed to Someone Cares. We are not writing them, you are. Let’s see—this one says “Dear Marie:” Marie who? Then, “Hi, Paul.” Paul who? On letters to and from inmates, from you, ”Someone Cares” should not appear at all.

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### THEN THERE IS ANOTHER PILE

These are returned letters where the Pen Friend chose to use a One-name Pen-name. We have 13 Maries and 5 Marie Jones. This is our fault, as the prisons are changing rules. If you use a Pen Name, change it to two names; try to use part of your last name to make it computer friendly.

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### THE PACKET WE SEND YOU WHEN YOU WRITE...

...has an application from the inmate and a letter of introduction, some rules we suggest, and
there is a Blue form for you to fill out and return. Many of you did not. Please, if you have not sent us your name and Pen Name, do so and include your age, race and church affiliation so we have it on file. Also, if you have not just done so, include the name of the inmate or inmates assigned you.

**HORSE BEFORE THE CART**

Yvonne and I have spent hours going through all the Blue forms we got back, trying to match them with unknown inmate letters. It seems some of you used a Pen Name and forgot to tell us. Then we find those of you who wrote via Email, a whole lot of you never sent us information on yourself.

**SPEAKING OF E-MAIL LETTER WRITING**

If you want to write via Email, which is neat, you must:

Start the Email letter with the inmate’s full name and number, plus the address just as you would if you were writing a business letter. Complete the letter, and “sign” it with your full name or Pen Name. One of our Pen Friends wrote a bunch of folks with a form letter. This is good if you make each one a little personal. You must deal with their letter to you. I am going to be, and so is Yvonne, writing to all unclaimed mail. We will take the time to personalize each letter.

**I GOT NO ANSWER AND QUIT!?**

Folks, inmates have, and in most cases deserve, a tough time in prison. They may not have a pen, paper, pencil, envelope, or stamp.

You may not be what they were looking for. We ask you to write three times, then let us re-match you if there is no answer. Jesus will never quit working on us, we should follow HIS guiding. If you are matched with someone you are not comfortable with, let us rematch you both.

I matched a lady and never got an answer. I tried Information and called her (she was listed). She was open and honest, admitted getting the packet and seeing it was not for her, threw it away???

Well, that scared me, so now we have to make a copy so if that happens we can rematch the inmate. I did not take the time to ask her why, just removed her from the computer and added her to our prayer list.

**IS THERE AN EASY WAY?**

We will take a little time to enter the mindset of an inmate. Male or female, Black or white, prison is a place where everyone is forced to change. They enter a place full of hate and little place to hide. Boredom is the worst enemy of all. Some, not many, are tough enough to adjust. The rest try to make it through whatever.
Contact by the outside world is vital to sanity. Our Pen Friend Program serves a mixture of inmates via a mixture of Pen Pals. Some interesting human “slow cooker recipes” are developed, making life for the prisoners more palatable.

Most are looking for someone of the opposite sex, for all the wrong reasons. When we receive an application, and a letter or request, we never choose who we match with whom. We have a pile of inmates opposite a pile of free folks. We match top of pile to top of pile. We try sometimes to match race with race. Often a College grad gets matched with a high school or world dropout. It is trial and error.

If you are or have been matched with an inmate and it does not work out, don’t just quit, let us know. We will take that inmate and give you another.

Walk before you run. Don’t jump in with Bible at the ready to do spiritual battle. Take your time. You need to learn about your new Pen Friend, his/her background, and what it’s like where they lived. Deal with their letter and find out about them by asking questions, but write and write again before letting us know that we need to rematch you.

WISH ALL WERE LIKE THIS

We received your newsletter today and we want to say “thank you” for all you do for the people in prisons and for having this ministry. Words can not convey what a blessing you have been to others and to us. When we joined the program we were matched with Charles. My husband and I have been writing him for awhile. We believe God matched us with Charles for a reason. He has been a blessing to us with his letters and poems about God.

My mom has always made up Bible questions for us each month. She picks a book of the bible and then writes out 30 questions and riddles. We have included Charles; it has been a blessing for him also. My family all got together and had a book store send him a Bible. He has become a friend, not just an inmate in prison somewhere. God has really transformed Charles’ life. You can see it in his letters. I believe this ministry is a total blessing from God.

A lot of people question us, “How can you write someone in prison?” or, “Aren’t you afraid of writing to someone there? What happens if they get out?” etc. To us there are no questions. How can you reach someone if you never reach out and extend yourself? I think today people are too comfortable with their lifestyles. We all need to get a little uncomfortable and get off the pew and get out among them.

It’s all about people, in my book. Help as many as we can in the time we have been given, and God will do the rest. We pray for you daily and you have been a blessing to many.

Paula and Danny

THEN THERE IS

Please take us off your list. We received a terrible letter from an inmate and we want nothing to do with your ministry. (Apparently one we missed.)
Try, folks, keeping in mind that we are about trying to change folks with God’s love. It is such a joy to see folks we know taking on the rough-and-tumble world of prison.

MARGARET WROTE

You guys have matched me with 56 inmates over the years. Thirty-three of them fell by the wayside when they found out they could not get all kinds of stuff from me. Of these, nine have come back and it is a struggle, but God is in control.

Some are just friends that may never change, but have done a little positive thinking I am Mom, Grandma, Sis to all.

Three became very special. I wrote each a dozen letters with no answer but I kept on. This finally reached all. Two of the three are taking Bible studies-- not doing well, but trying. One, a member of a very bad prison gang, has given that up and is thinking of someday getting out. A lesson for any writing long-term inmates. Being institutionalized is a way of life. Sort of being brain washed. Getting changes, with no positive role model, is tough.

Your newsletters have helped a lot, as you know what is really going on. My sheltered life never took me into the world were color is a problem. Two men who are both at Corcoran in California said you have to join a gang of color to survive. My advice to all: If you are not having success with your friend: call, write, or Email Don or Yvonne. They will help you. Don’t just give up—that is a solid victory for Satan. If you get a Pen Friend and don’t write, that is a slap in the face to Christian values. When Don held a meeting at our church, one of the men asked how to deal with someone beneath him. Don said, “Jesus did not know anyone beneath Him and I don’t either.”

Today, and for the last six years, that man holds a Bible study in prison.

YVONNE’S CORNER

I would like to share two letters that we received this past month:

“I would also like to request another Pen Friend. No, I’m not giving up my present Pen Friend, I feel I have the time to add one more. My present Pen Friend will be getting released in May, so I want to start early. I could even maybe take two more.”

Janet

This next one is from Mary:

“I am enjoying writing to the prisoners and becoming involved with their families. I have been adopted as “Mom” and “Grandmother.” I’m being blessed as much as they are. Glad I got involved!

I am also glad they got involved. Do you need a blessing? We have a lot of inmates who need someone to care enough to write. We will gladly work with you through any problems you might have. God Bless!
**GOD HAS REALLY BLESSED**

We have grown! Most of the results are very positive. With our growth, which is daily, come expenses. If you write via Email, which from Australia to France you do, we pay postage, mailing your Email to the inmate and the inmate’s mail to you. If you are not writing but can be a Faith Partner, it sure will help. We have been asked about Tithe, God’s 10%. We don’t solicit it, but do accept it.

**JEAN’S JOTTINGS**

Winter’s cold hands seem to have slipped off whatever they held so tightly, enough that the flowers bravely peeked out of their leafy covers. One morning the lawn was abloom with bouquets of crocus, and life was once more filled with promise.

Shirley, who is in charge of our church’s prison ministry, looks up something for our Chapel attendees to read and absorb. They take in the Word by reading aloud as they grasp the pages (sight, hearing, and touch). They take extra copies back to their cubicles and share with those who haven’t been to the service. They know their Bibles and do a great deal of missionary outreach in their daily lives. Their bi-weekly testimonies encourage us!!

As we cross the “yard” in the bleak winter months, there are few inmates sitting at the picnic tables, but let the sun come out in the spring, and the place is buzzing with activity. The spring bulbs in their beds brighten the walks with their blooms, and everyone comes out to enjoy the warmth of new life born of confinement.

Even the guards’ spirits are lifted as they escort us to the other side of the yard. We’ve been told that the guards know us by our first names. We’re treated with great respect, as are all volunteers who serve the prison and its inmates. We gradually learn a bit about their families, although they keep a professional demeanor at all times.

A prison “yard” is not like the lawns we know. High (12-16 ft.) chain link fencing lines the sidewalks inside the entire compound, where guards and others can walk in safety between buildings. At strategic points, locked gates are located for extra security. Atop all the fencing, a barrier of looped, barbed razor ribbon glints and gleams in the sunlight, showing its thin, cruel blades ready to shred the flesh of anyone stupid enough to challenge its nature.

The campus is divided into block areas by these fences, where the inmates plant beautiful flower or vegetable gardens that produce abundantly!

A “level” doesn’t mean how many stories there are in a building; they’re rated by crime level. Level 1, for instance, is for those who commit non-violent crimes, and continue up the scale at the facility we serve, which goes to Level 4.

We have held chapel services for Levels 1 and 2 so far, nothing compared to what Don and Yvonne have been in.

When we check in, we put things like purses, car keys, etc. into a locker, making sure we have
our ID cards. We sign the book at the front desk (when we go in and come out).

The next stop is to freshen up, use the restroom if necessary, and sit in the waiting room to chat with anyone who might be in need spiritually.

A female guard calls us into the check-in room, we pass through the metal detector, our coat pockets are checked for any forgotten items. One of us signs out to the Chapel while the other is patted down, one hand marked with a fluorescent marker, our IDs changed to prison ID cards and a small PPD (personal protective device).

The door slides open, we cross another area to the exit door, a buzzer indicates we can open two doors to the prison compound. A short walk past beautiful flowers is a gate where our guard meets us for our hike to the Chapel. It takes us across the asphalt-paved yard where inmates sit at picnic tables, play basketball or “street hockey.”

Our walk to the Chapel is usually accompanied by the guard who will be on duty for the day. He checks us in again, and unlocks our half of the Chapel, then our locker. Each church has a locker where we store tracts, extra study guides, hymnals, and booklets. Our inmates are free to take study materials back to their cells.

Our inmates love to sing, so we have a lively music session, accompanied by a donated organ, then “do church.” The guard’s desk is in the lobby, and when the Chaplain is in, they really enjoy listening to us all singing together.

One of the beauties of the Someone Cares system is that it doesn’t matter what level an inmate rates on paper. He or she is still safely reachable with Paper Sunshine.

If Jesus could heal the demoniac, and command the man’s demons to leave, He can reach inside the walls of the deepest prison to cast out the demons through God’s love, through prayer, and an encouraging word.

I certainly don’t suggest that you just take pen in hand and start your ministry from that end! Jesus told His disciples, when they asked why they were unable to cast out some evil spirits, that it took a great deal of prayer. Let Him lead.

God can do anything we ask, but prisons, by nature, are full of evil thoughts. When we sit down to write one of our Pen Friends, we should always begin with a prayer request to the One who can guide our thoughts, minds, and words so the person who receives the letter will be ready for our encouraging messages.

Pray also for a cleansing of all the hearts in the facility, the staff, the cell blocks, the cubicles, the cells themselves, cell mates, and your inmate in particular. You can reach thousands at one sitting, depending on the size of the prison where your Pen Friend is. How powerfully awesome is that?!

Food for Thought:

Someone Cares reaches prisons all over the world.