WE ARE SO GLAD YOU ARE A PART OF THE FAMILY OF GOD:

We do welcome so many new folks to this ministry. We know all of Heaven said “Amen” when we were able to match over 500 inmates. Please remember, this is a Pen Friend Program. Your letters will be going into a world few really know, and most want to forget.

A LITTLE EXTRA INFORMATION

You were matched with the person we sent because he or she was on top of a large pile of inmate applications. We opened this program up to all inmates and folks, some of them are really bad. When you write through us, we will weed out some of the folks we matched you with. One reason: the inmates’ letters indicated no interest in change. You will be aware of what we are doing.

Some of you will stick with us. If you are married, make SURE you tell your mate you are writing, and mention him or her. Since the Lord’s love has sent this ministry around the world, one note: Please put your name and our return address on the upper left corner of the envelope. Seal the envelope, as we don’t read it.

PRISON

...a place where men and women are jammed into small areas. Someone stated a dog in the pound will have more room than an inmate does. Gangs, drugs and violence are everywhere. Fear is in the heart and mind of almost everyone, Danger is around every corner. Hate burns in the soul of too many. We are blessed, seeing some of the worst of the worst turned to Jesus by those of you dedicated to a mission. The goal is turning all to Jesus, or a better way of life, putting purpose and direction in their minds.

Most in prison never finished school. Most in prison have had friends and family turn their backs on them. A lot of those in prison really are not guilty of anything. Then, many in the church are guilty but were never caught.

AN EXAMPLE:

Good Morning. I just want to say thank you for your prison outreach program. My stepson has
been in prison for 11 years. No one except us visits him. His mom and I are friends. Raised in a large family, all have turned their backs on him. He was only 17 when he got in trouble. It is sad. My husband comes from a large family and no one will even send him a Christmas card.

I feel bad when people judge him for one day in his life. Whatever happened to unconditional love? You must be angels on earth! You help folks in prison, and you don’t know them.

BEFORE PRISON:

I was a straight-A student, into sports, and had a lot of friends and a big family. I messed up and am in prison where I deserve to be. Everyone said to me, “We will visit, and send you things.” Sure, we will visit. My parents write once in awhile, but have never visited. I guess my Grandma got in touch with you. My Pen Friends have visited and done a whole lot for me.

Because Someone Cares, I now care, and there is a bright light at the end of the tunnel. There is a man here who has been locked up for 22 years. Never a visit, never a letter, and all his relatives blocked his collect calls. He was really bad – he deserved Life without Parole.

On his own, he changed, got a GED, found Christ, and helped others. He had no chance for anything but hell. Now he rests, awaiting Christ’s return. If there were more ministries like Someone Cares and the people who are a part of it, there would be much less crime.

WE DON’T WANT THOSE KINDS OF PEOPLE IN OUR CHURCH

I was asked, years ago, to put on a Stop Smoking Clinic. I said, “Sure, but only if I could put in a Stop Drugs and Alcohol along with it.” The church board came up with the title above.

Yvonne and I have walked the prison cell blocks with the worst of the worst. At night we heard their tears.

I have no use for crime, and neither does the Bible. Jesus stopped dying to try to save two more. He got one. Some people are just bad, the rest through just being born, have their backs against the wall. I am reminded often of my becoming a Christian. Including being an atheist, I had done some bad, some stupid things. When God’s Holy Spirit moved in, all the old was GONE. I joined the church, offering to take any job, any position, and became a pretty good member. We had a ton of friends and things were going well.

I was asked to give my testimony, no holds barred, and I did. When the service was over, people walked away instead of toward us. Thank God for Yvonne, who kept me on that straight and narrow path. We can’t help folks out of the gutter without getting a little dirty.

The way to be a good Christian is to be a good listener. Men and women leave prison, determined to make it, but are rejected at the church door.

I have written this before, but one of the greatest times I ever had was accepting an invitation to a church where no one knew us. We dressed like street people and the greeters did not greet us. When we sat down, everyone moved. Then we got up, Yvonne to the piano and me to preach. “I was naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not feed me.”
Thank you, Jesus, for always being there for us. If ever asked to do anything in the name of Jesus, say “I’ll be happy to.”

**DO NOT TRY TO BRING THEM UP TO WHERE YOU ARE!**

But try to get to understand where they are. If you find fault with them, try to deal with the problem with care.

Separated from the opposite sex, some will try hard to make a pass. Explain Agape.

Being a friend means trying to care and if you can, share. If they ask for things and you cannot give, say so openly. Many will try to get you to write direct, and some of you will. Let us know. All will want to call; this gives your location (bad move) and can get very expensive, as all calls are collect and at very inflated prices.

With the massive over-crowding, prisons are full. No school, no jobs, no nothing. You and I think little about pens, paper, envelopes or stamps. Inmates often trade meals just to get a stamp.

With the violence in prison, lock-downs are common. When a lock-down occurs, inmates are often separated from their property, so they can’t write.

We are used to writing and getting an answer. If they don’t have a stamp, they cannot write. The hardest part of this ministry is no answer. We ask you to write at least three letters; if no answer, we will contact the prison for you and see what the problem is. Writing through us, we pick up on any problems and can advise you.

**SEVERAL OF OUR BIGGEST PROBLEMS**

The one that hurts the most. Folks hear or see us speak. The emotion of the minute grabs your heart and you sign up. Bingo! You get a packet and are matched with an inmate. You read the information and are not comfortable with it. We then ask you to return the packet. Too many don’t – they just do not write. Many choose to use a Pen Name and forget to tell us. If you use a Pen Name, make it a first and last name. If you have written and had no answer, try again.

Writing via Email: If you do this, on the first line put your real name and pen name. (We cut this off.) Start your letter with the inmate’s name, number and full address. Now, here we need a bit of help. We take the Email letter, address it, and mail it. One set of Stamps = $0.74

When the inmate writes back, there’s another stamp. $0.74 times one thousand adds up.

On the envelope to your inmate, “Someone Cares” should not appear. On the envelope you put your inmate’s letter in, we need your full real name. At the end of this newsletter section, will be a list of names. These letters are from inmates – we have no idea whose they are; please claim. When we matched you, we sent a blue form to return to us; please do. We also have a postal increase coming and to us it’s a big one! With this ministry now reaching from France to Australia and all over Canada, it will bite a bit. Becoming a Faith Partner (supporter) is not required, but sure does help.
PLEASE GIVE THIS TO YOUR PASTOR: We are in dire need for your church members to write inmates in a risk-free letter-writing program. Please visit our web page and scroll through; also put a note in your bulletin. Hebrews 13:3 tells us to remember the inmates as if chained with them. When more churches start working together, we will HEAR THAT TRUMPET SOUND. ... GOD.

YVONNES CORNER

It is so great to see so many of you willing to write. If this is your first time, be ready for God to work through you and your writing skills. You will be amazed at what He can do.

. Being raised as a child, I was always around a lot of ministers. Since my father was one, it seemed very common for them to refer to their congregation, as the saints. I wondered about that for a long time and finally had the courage to ask my Grandma why did so many preachers say that? She looked at me and smiled. She said that she didn’t know because we are all sinners. Well, that was food for thought that I have never forgotten.

With Spring around the corner, let’s all spring into action for God!

OUR PROBLEM BOX

Most of this came from not sending back the Blue information sheet we sent you, or using a pen name and not telling us.

Ann Ball from M Gordon,
Sue Bedford from L Perez,
Elsie Bont from J Smith
Johnson Brethren from Jay Manning,
Betty Brown from Bonnie Valdez,
Rachel Butler a bunch,
Rachel C from Jame Emmrick,
Carolina from Kenny Green,
Andy Cast from ?
Nadine Clark from K Gross,
Anne E form R Lopez,
Ruth E from Carolyn Payton,
Mary Eileen from A Hernandez,
Kay Fox from Jack Hamons.
Frances from Michael Man
Linda Fried from A Saylor,
Guillermo From R Rodriguez

FOLKS THIS IS A FEW. IF YOU WROTE AN INMATE, SEND US HIS OR HER NAME, PLEASE. BETTER YET, WRITE AGAIN

Don
TAKING A MOMENT

We have, and are asking you all, to enter prison via letter writing. We do not control who you are matched with.

We have seen men shot, stabbed, raped and more. We have moved through prisons full of hate and fear. They are just not used to caring, sharing folks. They live by cunning and lies. The truth: they just don’t hear. Be open, honest and, if necessary, blunt as to why you are writing. Not hearing the truth, they are not used to telling it, either.

Use judgment and caution, knowing that we are the buffer. If you write and get no answer in 30 days, write again. If still no answer, we will re-match you.

If you get a rank inmate, we will re-match you and we will take them.

If you have used a one-name Pen Name, add a second name. Do not offer anything without asking us first.

If you have an Email address send it; if you don’t, borrow one so we can chat. Don’t put stick-ers of any kind on envelopes going to prison, except address labels.

If you are married, have your mate drop a note as well. Your inmate gets a bonus Pen Friend.

A THANKS FROM YVONNE

She is going through a really rough time with therapy. I did not like seeing her in pain after the accident; this is just as bad and three times a week. She does that for all prayer requests, and is free for those who need it.

If any of you is an expert in grant writing, we are looking for one. This ministry is growing so fast. Thanks.

With all our love,

Don & Yvonne

I TRADED THREE MEALS FOR THIS STAMP AND PAPER:

I don’t have a radio or TV. I only get out of my cell an hour a day unless the guards forget. I get a shower twice a week, maybe.

I changed cells last week and found an old newsletter of yours. You talked about being free in Jesus. I read and re-read that one page — all that was left.

I have spent most of my life around crime and hate. Been locked up 18 years; no mail, no visits, and no one to accept my calls. I was a gang member until I refused to kill someone. I was beaten and stabbed myself.

The Chapel is across the yard and when they have service, I hear the music. I was thirteen the...
last time I went to church at my Mom’s funeral. My dad, a drunk, never showed up; in fact I have never seen him since Mom died; he took off.

I’m not educated, and not too smart or I would not be here. But if there is any chance for me in this world, it must be now. Please,

Roger.

(I had to rewrite this as spelling and grammar were pretty bad, and several words we could not print. Yvonne and I are going to take this man for awhile, but please pray for him.

ODDS AND ENDS:

Most of you just joining us have already written. Please, if you have your blue form, send it or the information.

An alert on phone calls: If you allow your phone number to be given, all the calls will be collect at a rate three times the normal price (or more).

1. These calls also reveal where you live.

2. If you’re not sure about your situation, please discuss it with Don or Yvonne by phone or Email before you take the plunge. Calls can run from $7 - $15,

3. Keep in mind that inmates are incredibly lonely and bored. Phone calls are an irresistible solace.

JEAN’S JOTTINGS

The flower beds at the prison where we minister are showing signs of life. As I’m jousting with my computer, the outdoor temperatures are slowly rising, making a wonderful comeback from last fall.

I’m one of those who suffer from Seasonal Affective Disorder, and anxiously look forward to sunshine to pull me out of the pit. The tulips force their way onward and upward before the ground thaws.

So if some of us can be in the pits for several months of the year, think of our Pen Friends locked away in a dreary cell with little to do but read, or perhaps be in one of the rare schools, or enrolled in a crafts program.

Find a sweet Bible verse to cheer, or find a story or article to send to your friend before he or she gives in to discouragement because of whatever they did to create the sorry state they’re in.

We’ve been especially chosen by Jesus Himself to be an ambassador of good will through the Pen Friend Program.

A friend once blessed me, one dreary Christmas, with a Swarovsky star to put in an east-facing
When the early morning sunshine streams in the window, that star fills the whole room with bursts of exquisite rainbow colors on every wall and the ceiling.

When your inmate hears his or her name at mail call, you can be sure you just filled a soul with rainbows!

Might you be one of those with the compassion to take on someone on Death Row? Don, in his unique way, introduced me to a man who’d met Jesus and it completely changed his life (and mine as well). He had a thriving ministry from his cell, under lock-down 23 hours a day.

It was Don and Yvonne who came to my church for both a morning and afternoon service. My memory isn’t the best, but in that dim past I somehow became your editor and hooked up with my dear sister in Jesus to do prison ministry on our own.

We’ve all been so blessed!

Someone Cares Home Page