SOMEONE CARES PRISON MINISTRY

Quietly Changing Lives

Archived Newsletter

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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
**HAPPY HOLIDAYS**

Each year we end with a prayer that it will be the last here on this earth. We thank the Lord for the birth of Jesus. Then we look with amazement at the world we live in! All the signs of HIS return are everywhere. Then we think that maybe, through this ministry, someone will reach the last knee to bow.

The “Joy to the World” we sing about is very hard for many to find. But the birth of Christ gives each of us a present that is out of this world.

**PLEASE HAVE SPECIAL PRAYER FOR ALL THE FIRE VICTIMS IN CALIFORNIA.**

**BEFORE JESUS**

In my life, Christmas had a different meaning. Way back then, the tree was put up on Christmas Eve. Would there be a present for me? Often not.

Then I got into the world, and Christmas was about a party, lots of decorations, and lots of gifts. Sure, we sang all the words to all the songs, but not for the right reason. I can remember one Christmas – I was twelve and in a boys’ home. I got a bowl of soup and a beating for Christmas, and added an extra measure of hate to that which I already had.

Late Christmas Eve, my mom showed up. She saw the blood through my shirt and whisked me away. But too much had happened and I started my wandering through the world to jail and prison and the fast life. I have run away from one bad life (not my mom’s fault) to another. It was years before I returned.

**THE FLIP SIDE OF THE RIGHT SIDE**

I was smart enough to be successful at almost all I did. Money, cars, boats, all the toys of Satan’s turf. My motto was: live fast, die young, and have a good-looking corpse. My life was a mess, but I kept on keeping on.

The birth of Jesus, I doubt in December, was a gift to so many and it would give me a present for eternity. My new birth brought so many gifts I forget the material things so many of us put so much value on.

**GIFTS THAT LAST FOREVER**

My name is Angelo and I’m sending this Christmas card because I’m still alive. I was a gang member from Los Angeles, and after being caught in a drive-by, I was sent to Paso Robles Boys’ School. Not much changed except I was locked up.

I met you, your wife, and Mark at that place. I was fifteen and pretty wild. I sat in with Mark for a few sessions and Chaplain Curry hooked me up with Don. His life was like mine, rough on the streets. I, like all my friends, were destined to end up in prison or dead. With the help of these
folks, I met Jesus and a new and free life.

When released, I went back to East Los Angeles; nothing there had changed. The temptation was still there, but what I had learned was for real. I have been out now for a long time. I got out of East Los, am married with two kids, and am a member of a neat church.

I am also called to work with gang bangers who are arrested. It sure is nice to help others see where NOT to go.

THE GIFT OF CHRISTMAS

Came to me in a very bad place: a women’s prison in Michigan. Yvonne was the Chaplain here, and Don was the Chaplain of the men’s prison across the street. Like most, I had gone to church as a kid, but it did not mean much. In prison, most go to church out of fear. Most of the time it is peaceful.

Most volunteers who came in wanted to teach us about their religion. Yvonne and Don taught us about Jesus. They were under attack from the time they started. These people worked full time and were not paid by the State or the church.

The paid Chaplains and their union tried to get them fired, as they were a threat to their status. Jesus stepped in and stopped the wasted effort.

I was serving 20 years for manslaughter; I killed my husband to save my life. When Jesus came in, my life changed—still is changing. The Bible studies they offered and the Pen Friends made things happen. Don and Yvonne went back to California but kept in touch.

They kept praying and so did I. This brought a Christmas miracle; in 1998 I was given an early parole. I am now free and a Pen Friend. Thanks to you, Someone Cares.

Judy Smythe

CHRISTMAS ON DEATH ROW

My name is Bob and I’m on Death Row. I deserve to be here. I am ashamed of my life and the things I have done. I’m surrounded by hate, violence and fear. I am not afraid of dying. In fact, I was thinking about taking my own life when I met Don and Yvonne. I had been on the row for almost a year when I met them. They came to my cell and wanted to know if I needed any Christmas cards to send out.

I laughed, as everyone I knew had given up on me. We talked awhile, it was neat. They came back every couple of weeks. Got me a Bible and a Pen Friend. I was given a book called Steps to Christ that brought me to my knees.

Shortly after Christmas in 2001 my sentence was commuted to life without parole. Now, that’s a l-o-n-g time! But Jesus has set me free. My life has a new direction, thanks to a couple of caring, sharing folks.

-Bob-
IN THE BEGINNING

We could never dream, when Jesus spoke to me, that we would end up so many years later, doing what we do.

We kept records in a notebook. Every step of the way, God brought just the right people to push/pull or slow us down. When you dedicate your life to Jesus and He takes charge, it is amazing. A Chaplain friend once said,

“But you don’t ever know how much you are making.”

As I have said, we were promised the cattle on a thousand hills.

On an early speaking engagement at a Spanish church, I told the folks about a group of Mexican workers living in caves and under trees in Watsonville. A released inmate, with no home, went to stay there. (During a break, several men told us we had to wait after our evening program until they got back. We were driving a small hatchback.)

We closed the evening program and got the surprise of our ministry. Hundred-pound sacks of rice and beans, canned food by the boxes, clothes by the bundles. Also a box of money. This was in San Jose, and we had to drive over a hill to Santa Cruz — just enough room for Yvonne and I.

We had intended to deliver it in the morning but decided, why wait? It was hard to find! We called the Spanish pastor and he helped us locate them. We were swamped with love and hugs and blessings in Spanish! It was two days before Christmas. The pastor helped with the distribution of the funds. Yvonne and I helped with the increase.

THE JESUS IN US AND THE JESUS IN YOU

Each day as this ministry grows, we are blessed. We are going to have to make some changes very soon to handle the growth.

We need hundreds of Christians willing to write inmates.

We need a massive amount of prayer regarding the right choices.

We need especially dedicated Faith Partners. We are looking for Mens’ and Womens’ groups to make letter writing a mission field.

We have some senior citizens willing to write a lot of inmates, and they are on a very limited income.

GOD WILL PROVIDE ...

Dear Don & Yvonne, I am in a nursing home on a very limited income. I would write more than
one, but each letter is 41 cents. (to us, it is 81¢; to the inmate and the writer.) We have a bunch, so if you would like to sponsor someone
WELCOME!!

SINCERE GREETINGS TO ALL

My name is Ismael, writing from prison. I just found out about your ministry through a fellow inmate. I am aware you are a Christian ministry and offer Pen Friends. Living in prison is a very hard life. Letters from a friend or relative are really therapy. Myself, a letter from someone is worth more than silver or gold. I admire what you are doing, as so many that offer the service do not follow through without a charge. You are providing light, happiness and smiles to people who have little left. I thank you prayerfully for what I am yet to receive.

YVONNE’S CORNER

I know that this is a very busy time of the year for most of you, but as I read the letter from Ismael, I wanted to share it with all of you.

Each one of you who writes is very special, because you give of your time to some of the least of them. Unless you have been to prison, you have no idea how lonely it really is, or how violent it can be.

Even the people who work there need encouragement. Let us all remember that Jesus is the reason for the season. I pray that we all may share with whoever we can. May God bless each of you as you share Jesus with others.

TO GOD BE THE GLORY

Yvonne and I take credit for what all of you do — anything for and through this ministry. Some in prison are at the Gate of Hell and a push is what the world offers. We pray, through you, that we can pull them free.

Q: A friend asked us what we wanted for Christmas:
A: To see Jesus...
B: To have a hundred Pen Friend groups who would take on a hundred inmates. Sure, once in awhile we get that old, rotten apple, but not too many.

The reason this ministry has been around a long time: the inmates refer other inmates and explain the rules. Sure, we get guys who try all kinds of things, and once in awhile they slip through.

For five years, we have kept track of 100 inmates who have been a part of this ministry, and are now released.

Seven have returned to prison; five are back in the Pen Friend Program. That’s pretty good stuff
with recidivism well over 65% nationwide.

May God grant each of you a Happy Holiday season.

ALL DONATIONS ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE: RECEIPTS WILL BE SENT WITH THE FEBRUARY NEWSLETTER.

JEAN'S JOTTINGS

It’s been a beautiful autumn with red and gold leaves still clinging to their trees. November is half over as we write this newsletter. Another month means we’re that much closer to Jesus’ coming to free us from the prison Satan tries to keep us locked in.

A friend calls prison a “Razor Wire Resort.” Not much fun, right? Where’s the beach, the ocean, the mountains, or the solitude of a woodland trail that follows a stream tumbling over rocks as it rushes toward a river.

Our life with Satan and his fallen angels is not a pleasant one. As our earthly sojourn winds down, the events are increasingly violent. Robbery, drugs, TV shows, bad food, disease, disagreements, disasters in larger proportions, those in charge of our government take what they want for themselves or start wars among other nations ... it’s time to lift up our heads; our redemption is right around the corner.

There are folks in prisons who are falsely accused, and must wait out their lives. Jesus will bring His reward with Him when He comes. How exciting that is!!

The group we serve as volunteers amazes us. Those who were once very shy have become evangelists. It’s so rewarding to watch their spiritual growth. They have a holy boldness about them as they minister to those in the cells, or “cubes,”

When they come to Chapel services, they freely discuss the situations, good or bad, of their lives, who they’ve shared the gospel with on the yard.

In Michigan, as in many other prisons, the government is tearing down facilities, then double-bunking to cause unrest among inmates. For instance, a four-man cell now houses eight. Tempers run hot and anger explodes over any trivial infraction, such as over-stepping the boundaries within a cell. Violence might break out over “stores” (things one inmate buys from the prison “store” and another, more predatory inmate will attack him to take the goods for himself.

We’re grateful that the guardian angels assigned to us are respectful, large, pleasant. The inmates we serve are good Bible students, enjoy music, love Jesus, eagerly participate in chapel services.

Yes, they’ve messed up — haven’t we all? Jesus reaches out to all of us with forgiveness in his wounded hands and in His heart. What a wonderful Savior we have, who won’t reject us.

Someone Cares Home Page