

Quarterly Newsletter Jottings

August 2023

Our mission - *Onesimus Ministries exists for the purpose of introducing prison inmates, ex-inmates and their families to the lifechanging good news of Jesus Christ, as well as spiritually supporting and assisting anyone in becoming faithful in their daily walk as Christ's disciples.*

From the Board of Directors

Andy
Duncan

If You Can't Be There, Engage In Prayer

1 John 5:14 – “This is the confidence we have approaching God; that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.”

About a month ago, my wife and I, along with other members of our Church, travelled to Minnesota and attended a training called Engage Global. We did not go because we feel called to international missions, but rather to learn more about God's heart for the lost; especially in unreached countries where the people have no idea who Jesus is, much less know anything about the Gospel. It was a wonderful time, including the firehose of information and many takeaways of how we can participate in Global Missions effectively without actually becoming missionaries.

One of those takeaways was the reminder of the power of prayer. All of us, I'm sure, have experienced God's love and power through answered prayer – even if it wasn't the response that we prayed for. We know God loves us and His ways are perfect and to paraphrase Spurgeon I believe: “We need to trust God's heart, when we can't trace His hand.” We see in God's Word many examples of the power of prayer and God's faithfulness in answering it – especially on the Cross.

2 Peter 3:9 speaks of God's heart towards the lost, which is all of us, that none should perish, but that all should reach repentance. We can all pray for the lost towards that end! I think it's safe to say that all of us who have truly repented of our sins and put our faith and trust in Jesus can attest to the fact that there were people praying for us. I know that's true for me and I am forever grateful to those folks. So, even though you may not feel called to be directly involved in Prison Ministry, please pray for us. The doors have opened again and we will face many challenges as no doubt the enemy will seek to distract, discourage and stop us. We are so grateful for all the financial support we receive, but I find in my life it can actually cause me to forget to pray. There is nothing compared to the power of prayer. It is a way to cultivate love for the lost and to grow closer to the Lord as we seek to align our will with His. Thank you again for all your support!! We look forward to this new season of Prison Ministry and we take great comfort in knowing our brothers and sisters are praying for us. Thank you!!



But for the Grace of God, there go I

Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. Isaiah 55:7

This verse in Isaiah 55 twice mentions the word “**let**” (‘āzab in Hebrew), which can be translated as “forsake, leave, leave off, **fail**eth, fortify, help, committeth, destitute, refuseth, surely”.

It is clear from the text that the “wicked” and “unrighteous” need to “turn from” and then “turn to”. While its understandably easy to visualize an incarcerated inmate as the wicked and unrighteous, it should also dawn on each of us (who happen to read this outside a prison) that this verse is describing “me”.

“*But for the Grace of God, there go I*” is a phrase most widely attributed to John Bradford, who said it upon seeing criminals who were being led to their execution in 1553. Bradford himself was executed two years later for heresy. He was a Protestant living in Roman Catholic English.

2023 and 1553 may be many years apart but it does not reduce the urgency for each of us to turn from wicked and unrighteous acts in our own lives and to urge, help (**let**) others to do the same.

Most attempts to help sinners, however, falls flat if the “turn to” does not end at the feet of Jesus where pardon is offered. Notice again that “Azab” include the active verb of “helping”. This helping clearly requires each of us whether we’re a prison chaplain or not, to actively work in word and in deed, in prayer or in giving to help (**let**) turn sinners to The LORD.

Please pray for us as chaplains never to forget... “*But for the Grace of God, there go I.*”



Where God Dwells

As you may know, if you receive the prayer request list that Rick sends out each week, I recently took part in a tour to Israel. It had long been a dream of mine, to travel to the Holy Land and actually see the sights I’ve only read about in the Bible for such a long time. The trip was everything I had hoped it would be. So many times, I felt like I needed to pinch myself, hardly believing I was actually in the Land of the Bible; the land where the patriarchs wandered, where King David had his exploits with his mighty men, where Solomon’s Temple stood, and most especially, the land where Jesus lived, walked, taught, and healed.

One of the thoughts that ran through my mind the most is: “I had no idea Israel was such a beautiful country.” It is breath-takingly beautiful: from the barren, sandy hills of the Judean desert, to the calm, serene majesty of the Sea of Galilee, to the stunning vistas of the Dead Sea,

there was so much beauty to behold. Yes, a beautiful country, Israel. But the jewel in the crown is Jerusalem. A quote I came across recently from the Talmud states, "Ten measures of beauty descended to the world; Jerusalem took nine."

On our tour, we visited so many historical/biblical sites. Most notable among them (for me) were:

- The Jordan River, at the place called the Baptismal Site, where they believe Jesus was baptized. Just setting my feet in the brown water of the Jordan was thrilling.
- The Temple, the holiest site for the Jews, the place where God said He would put His Name forever; wherein was contained the Holy of Holies, where the Presence of God rested above the Arc of the Covenant. Standing at the Western Wall, my mind swirled with all these thoughts and emotions. The very Presence of God...so nearby, in His desire to dwell among His people.
- The visit to Gethsemane and Golgotha were also surreal. Standing there it was hard to wrap my mind around what had taken place at these sites so many years ago, and the world-shaking implications of those events.... the very Son of God choosing to be a Sacrifice to save mankind.
- At the Garden Tomb, peaceful and serene, it was amazing and thrilling to see the open entrance. Not sealed off by a large stone, but standing open for any who would to come in and see that the Tomb is, indeed, empty.

What a blessing and a privilege to get to travel to this most amazing country. It's like stepping into the pages of the Bible. I am longing for the day when I can return. Thank you to those who prayed for me during my travels. Your prayers were answered. And thank you to all who support our ministry to the men and women of Chester County Prison. Our aim is to help them draw closer to this One Who sacrificed Himself for their sake. And your prayers and financial support help us do that. Thank you.

From the Treasurer

**Scott
Duncan**

"Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself" Matt 6:34(a)

The Lord is faithful to our needs, and we see how He proves His words true that we do not need to be anxious but rather thankful for all of the blessings He bestows. Onesimus is thankful for all our church, organizations, and individual donors who seek to bless this ministry by their gracious financial support! Heinrich and Rhonda are getting even more access again to the prisoners as covid restrictions are dissipating. We continue to trust the Lord that He'll show His power and love to the souls that are lost in this prison and everyone who supports this ministry financially, through kind words, and prayers is blessed with being a part of this mission field.

Please remember that our annual banquet will be held on October 27 where you can come to enjoy food and fellowship and to encourage our chaplains Heinrich and Rhonda and hear firsthand how the Lord is working in the Chester County prison. If any church or organization would like to sponsor a table at the banquet, please send in a gift of \$500 and reference "Table Sponsor". We look forward to seeing many of you at the banquet where we can encourage each other in the Lord.

Inside Again (Almost)

Finally, after three and a half years, we got the ok to go back "inside" on Monday night, August 7th. The lockout was due to covid and a shortage of officers at the prison. When we showed up on the 7th, we were turned away. A severe storm had affected the prison's electrical system. Disappointing but not defeating. We will be back next Monday night to share the gospel and every Monday night after that as long as God wants us there and the prison will let us in.

Announcements/Events

Phil
Taylor

Religious Volunteers return to Chester County Prison!

Praise the Lord! On the afternoon of Friday, Aug 4, we got word from officials at Chester County Prison that effective Monday, Aug 7th, cleared volunteers may resume our 2 weekly inmate church services in the prison Chapel. Our team is preparing to hold worship services Monday evening at 7:00pm and 8:30pm. Please join us in thanking our Heavenly Father and pray for the team that all will go well during our first inmate church services in 3.5 years.

Save The Date for the next Banquet!

Please be sure to mark your calendar for the next Annual Onesimus Prison Ministries Banquet on October 27, 2023.

Weekly Prayer Request Email

If you'd like to stay connected with the heart cries of inmates at Chester County Prison, we have a weekly prayer email that contains prayer requests from inmates via our resident Chaplains Rhonda and Heinrich, along with a few prayer concerns of Prison ministry in general. [Subscribe Here.](#)

You are receiving this email because you signed up for electronic newsletter delivery at the Annual Banquet, have requested online delivery of the newsletter, or are otherwise connected with the ministry (through prayer chains, board membership, ministry volunteer, etc.).

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God bless your day!



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