

Quarterly Newsletter Jottings

November 2024

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.*

Announcements/Events

Phil
Taylor

Who's up for some breakfast?

Everyone had a wonderful time at the Green Street Grill dinner. Our next event is the 1st Annual Benefit Breakfast at Waterway Church in Oxford, PA on March 1, 2025. More details to follow.

Mark your calendars and tell your friends!

From the Chairman

Vernon
Myers

We Thank You, Lord, For Your Faithful Provision

God has proven Himself faithful in providing the financial support for the Onesimus Ministry at Chester County Prison over the years. From the very beginning of Onesimus Ministries in 1978, the Mount Vernon congregation near Oxford hosted an annual Fall fundraising banquet. The food was always wonderful, and the testimonies of God's redeeming and sustaining grace were inspirational and encouraging. But after many years of Mt. Vernon's gift to Onesimus Ministry, we needed to find another venue going forward. The Board is very appreciative of Mt. Vernon kitchen staff who provided for such a wonderful evening year after year.

As the Board considered the options and opportunities going forward, we made the decision to move from one annual banquet to three separate events in differing locations across Chester County.

1. On Oct 25, Kerry Greco, the owner of the Green Street Grill in Downingtown, hosted an elegant evening meal in support of Onesimus Ministry at his restaurant. Eighty guests enjoyed good food, a wonderful atmosphere with harp and violin music, and a lively silent auction with the winners taking home their items. With the move to Downingtown a different set of people were introduced to the ministry at Chester County Prison. What a delightful evening!
2. On March 1, 2025 we are planning a Saturday morning breakfast at Waterway Church for the Oxford community. We will be having another silent auction as well.
3. On May 16, 2025 we are planning a Praise Music Benefit Concert at Grace Covenant Church in Exton. More details will be provided as planning continues.

We continue to trust the Lord for His provision. We see the necessary changes of venue as a real blessing. It is always good to involve new people in the outreach of Onesimus Ministries, praying they will catch the vision of the life changing good news of Jesus.



How does Onesimus Prison Ministry and County Corrections Gospel Mission (CCGM) relate?

This is a question asked by many who get involved with prison ministry at Chester County Prison (CCP). I'll attempt to give the nutshell version...the elevator speech version.

In 1973, a young pastor, John Lawrence Crans (fondly known as "Jack"), was appointed chaplain at Chester County Prison. What he saw broke his heart. He learned many lessons such as "your eyes will affect your heart"; "the most powerful prison ministry is a local church in a high crime area" and "drop your 'own' net and work-the-net...HIS net" to mention a few.

Jack was stirred into action and founded County Corrections Gospel Mission. He was a founding member of City Gate Mission to care for those who leave prison "but have nowhere to go". An old, abandoned camp site next to the Brandywine was purchased in faith to serve the children and loved ones of those incarcerated. Camp at Old Mill now is the head office of CCGM and annually hosts thousands of inner-city children from high-crime areas to offer them love and ultimately The Gospel.

At the same time, God was also working in the life of Doug Burnette, a young inmate from southern Chester county. He met the Lord and was eventually set free despite being incarcerated for a very serious crime. Once discharged he grew in his walk with the Lord Jesus and eventually approached Vernon Myers, his pastor with a strange request: "I want to go back to prison!" This time it was not a court-ordered sentence that would place him "behind bars" but the love-laden burden of a bondservant who wanted to return to the darkness where he was before.

Doug now wanted to share about the Light of Christ that shone in his darkness and set him free...free indeed. Vernon Myers and other godly men embraced Doug's vision and established Onesimus Prison Ministries. The miracle story of how Onesimus, the once useless slave we read of in Philemon, became a useful instrument in God's Hand, became the motivation for Onesimus to partner with CCGM to make ensure that there will always be a Gospel – presence at Chester County Prison.

Doug's story (as told by Mabel Kreider on our website contains many more details) still inspires hope to many who got entangled in a life of crime and moral depravation. Doug was able to serve as chaplain and walk with keys in a prison where he previously was locked up. Doug, now deceased, in fact was succeeded by another former CCP inmate, Peter Roomet. Peter faithfully served as chaplain at Chester County Prison until he retired in March 2018 and was succeeded by Heinrich Botes. In a faith-venture, Onesimus Ministries fully finances the ministry of Rhonda Soland, chaplain for the female population, three days per week.

In a testimony of faithfulness, Jack Crans is still the Senior Chaplain at Chester County Prison and Vernon Myers is still the Chairman of the Onesimus Board of Directors. These two ministries were birthed by Jesus Christ right here in the heart of Chester County and still work together as strategic partners to ensure a healthy chaplaincy program at Chester County Prison.

ALL PRAISE BELONGS TO HIM WHO SET THE CAPTIVES FREE!



New Life

At the end of last month, on Oct 25th to be exact, we held our ministry banquet dinner and fundraiser. We have been holding these banquets since the early days of Onesimus, and this was the 5th one I had attended since joining the ministry as a chaplain. We had a wonderful time!

It was a sell-out night, with all available tickets having been sold. The venue was perfect, the food was well-prepared, well-presented and tasted delicious. We had soft, subtle classical music playing in the background, provided by a harpist and a violinist. We had a silent auction table filled with a wide variety of attractive items to bid on—ranging from a collection of Christian living books to a stay at a beach vacation home.

The room was abuzz with conversation and laughter, as people fellowshiped with each other, or circulated through the tables to the buffet line or to browse the auction table. It felt lively and celebratory and fun. It was as though new life had been breathed into our banquet.

For the past few years, it had seemed as though something was missing from our banquet gatherings; a spark or a sense of excitement was missing. We needed to make some changes; we prayed and sought the Lord's leading. Step by step He led us, bringing the right people and the right ideas and inspiration to us, which produced the wonderful, energetic banquet which we enjoyed last month.

God is the God of "all things are possible". The One who sits on the throne says, "Behold, I make all things new (Revelation 21:5)." He is able to bring newness to life—whether for a ministry banquet or for whatever life situation we may find ourselves in. He can bring newness and freshness and change. What a wonderful, beautiful Savior!

From the Treasurer

Scott
Duncan

Treasurer Report Fall 2024

As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. (1 Peter 4:10)

Each day we're blessed with the opportunity to serve our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and fulfill His will. The best way to do that is by serving others and reaching the lost for Christ. Onesimus Ministries provides a way to reach lost souls in the Chester County prison who need to hear about the love of God and the consequences of sin. We're thrilled to be able to support our chaplains Heinrich and Rhonda as they're able to have face to face contact with the inmates and speak to the men and women who are searching for purpose in life.

On October 25th, we were blessed to have a benefit dinner at the Green Street Grill in Downingtown PA and the Lord used that opportunity to bring in over \$15,000 for the ministry. If you weren't able to have the opportunity to come that evening, you're still welcome to give anytime online by clicking on the "Donate Now" button on this site or by sending in a check to 145 Bethel Rd Oxford, PA 19363. We also plan on having two more to benefit functions in the coming year that will be announced soon. The Lord continues to show His goodness to those assisting the ministry and especially to the souls being reached at the Chester County Prison.

A Celebration of Thanksgiving and Praise

As we approach Thanksgiving and Christmas, I have been reflecting on this past year with regards to being part of Prison Fellowship and Onesimus Ministries. What a blessing it has been to me and I trust to those whom we minister and serve! First, I am so thankful that the Lord would look upon me in my helpless estate, dead in my sins and without hope or even the desire of hope and choose to save me. I need to pray this to myself everyday as I can get caught up in the day-to-day and take comfort in the gifts, neglecting the Giver. Praise to be God that I can call Him my God and my Heavenly Father, Jesus my King and my Friend and Holy Spirit as my Guide and my Comforter! Thank you, Lord!

I am grateful to God for putting in me 19 years ago the desire to serve in Prison Ministry. I recall shortly after being saved a sense that God would call me to serve in a way that I was not expecting and not in my comfort zone. Little did I know the amazing adventure that awaited me. I do not rejoice over the sins that have led to incarceration for anyone, but I do rejoice that our Savior has not overlooked those that we can be tempted to overlook and ignore because it's inconvenient for us. Praise Him for giving us hearts of flesh to show mercy to those who so desperately need it.

I am grateful for those that serve faithfully in this ministry every Monday evening. It was about this time last year that God led some men to serve in the second service which had been covered by the men of the first service. To my first service companions – Dan, Phil, Erwin, Rick, Andy – you were and continue to be a true blessing to me – thank you!! Thank you to Jose who leads worship in the 1st service for filling in for me at times. Welcome Jim! You are blessed to be with a great bunch of Godly men!

To the newer members, my second service peeps – Matt, Troy, Ryan, Bill – it has been wonderful watching you grow in this ministry and your love for the men. You have amazing gifts that you are using faithfully to serve the Lord. A special thank you to Rick, who attends both services faithfully, sends out the weekly prayer requests, this Newsletter and has been a great friend and counselor to me. Thank you, my brother!

Finally, to all who serve Onesimus in support of the Chaplains – Heinrich and Rhonda – another round of gratitude! To the Chaplains – what an amazing job you do! We hear your stories of God's work behind the walls and we rejoice, sometimes we cry, but we give thanks in all circumstances!

To the Onesimus board – Vernon, Phil, Dan, Rick, Scott, Jose, Heinrich and Rhonda – another shout of gratitude and praise! God blessed us with an amazing dinner this year which helped us tremendously in supporting this Ministry. This has been long-winded, my apologies, but the more I write the more I'm aware of to be grateful for. Lord, thank you! Jesus, we look forward to celebrating your birth, the greatest gift to mankind. We look forward to what You will accomplish in the coming year. All praise, glory and honor to You!

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 this ministry (through prayer chains, board membership, ministry volunteer, etc.).

If you do not wish to receive the newsletter by email, or wish to be removed from this email list for any reason, please send an email to unsubscribe@onesimusministries.org expressing your wishes.

God bless your day!



Onesimus Ministries
145 Bethel Road
Oxford, PA 19363
www.onesimusministries.org