

## Quarterly Newsletter Jottings

### February 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

#### Save the Date!

The 2024 Onesimus Banquet will be scheduled for October 25th. Mark your calendar and tell your friends!

### From the Board of Directors

Andy  
Duncan

#### What Do I Say?

It's early Monday evening and I pack up my Bible, guitar and songbook and head for Chester County Prison for two services of Prison Ministry. During the drive I'll typically pray about and reflect on the evening to come.

Dan leads the first service so my role most Monday nights is relegated to being the "band". Dan and Andy are the "choir directors" and do a great job of leading the guys through the songs that the inmates oft times choose.

I am responsible for leading the second service, so part of my role is to introduce the evening. What do I say? I believe it's important that the guys understand that Christianity is not about rules and regulations, but about the restored relationship with God possible only through Jesus Christ. Always trusting in the Holy Spirit, sometimes I have a prepared statement, other times I allow the Spirit to speak through me in the moment. More often than not, I share the Gospel, because that is the main reason we are there.

What about those Monday nights when I'm scheduled to bring the message. What do I say? I am so grateful that through the years the Lord has been faithful to inspire and guide me to teach from Scripture a message of God's love and hope for all. This is a message these guys desperately need to hear! I have my favorite Scriptures that I pull from and am also inspired by sermons that I hear on Sunday Mornings.

This is the most challenging part of this Ministry. I'm not really comfortable with public speaking and more sobering are the words spoken in James 3:1 "Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness." All of us are responsible to teach God's Word in a way that glorifies God by being true to His Word, holding fast to the meaning of the Scriptures and in great humility. This is why I often say being a Pastor is the hardest job in the world.

Despite my fears and my failures, God has been so kind to pour out His grace on me and grow me in this area. I trust the men are blessed by the message and I am blessed by mining the depths and riches of God's Word! It is sobering and helps me to see areas in my life that I need His grace to change. It is also a reminder when tempted to sin, that all who teach are accountable before God and as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 9:27 – "But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified."

In those moments when I reflect back on the evening when I have brought the message and wonder: did I say the right things, did I say them in a way that the guys could understand it, did I say too much, too little, etc., I am comforted by the Words of our faithful and loving God: "So shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it." Isaiah 55: 11 Praise be to our mighty and faithful God!!

## Chaplain Jottings



Heinrich  
Botes

### Those Persistent Mothers

In the so-called Parable of the Persistent Widow, Jesus told his disciples a story to show them that they should always pray and not give up. In Luke 18, verse 4 and 5 we discover the judge's thoughts, nowadays called 'self-talk':

"For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care what people think, 5 yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually come and attack me!'"

There are very few similarities in this parable between a judge and a prison chaplain but the impact of a praying and persistent mother or grandmother on a judge and a chaplain seems to be the same...it gets them to act decisively!

In the past few months, we have received several phone calls and voice messages from mothers and grandmothers who requested the chaplain to reach out to a "lost or wayward" son who is incarcerated at Chester County Prison. With several hundred inmates to serve, it is very easy for those type of requests to be placed at the back of the To-Do List...EXCEPT... when there is another follow-up call, followed by another follow-up call, followed by another follow-up voice message, followed by a follow-up email, followed by...you get the point?

Each call and each voice message would often be drenched with sincerity, pleading and tears, clearly with no intention to exploit "the system" but displaying a desperate attempt to see God work in that soul...even in the "pig stay" of prison. To hear the heart-cry of these women melts any resolve to be methodical and for a "wait your turn" approach!

What a joy then to discover that God is at work, to hear the joy and weeping on the phone when a prodigal and the caring woman in his life finally connect and especially when the "culprit" responds to the Gospel.

I could give specific examples but for the sake of privacy and keeping this article short, I will refrain, but know this...Persistent prayer and persistent love do make "judges" act in unusual ways.

## Chaplain Jottings



Rhonda  
Soland

## A New Thing

As the new year rolls around each year, I feel an excitement about the days ahead—feeling as though a new, clean slate has been placed before me, and with great excitement, I rush to plan out events, set goals, and make lists of all the things I want to accomplish over the next 365 days. I like to take time to look back and take stock of the previous year and see what was good, what was not good; what worked and what didn't work, so I can make changes for the new year. I make a list of the books I want to read for the year, a list of what projects and goals I want to work on, and what areas I want to see improvement in. All this is usually done with a lot of excitement and anticipation.

But this year feels a little different. I haven't felt that same enthusiasm for the new year that usually sends me into list-making, goal-setting, planning mode. I haven't done any of those things. I wasn't sure why or what it was until I met with a friend a couple of weeks ago and she was telling me that she didn't feel excited or motivated as she normally does for the new year. As she was talking, I realized she was voicing the same feelings that I was having about the new year that I hadn't even yet realized I had.

As we talked about the reasons we were feeling this way, we both mentioned that the world seems so troubled right now: we have two major wars going on, there is division and strife everywhere, financial stability concerns, environmental concerns, violence and aggression are prevalent in our society. We concluded that the state of our world was causing us to not have great expectation and anticipation for 2024. So I thought, "This can't be. I can't let everything going on in the world push me into some kind of down-hearted, burdened state."

Then a few days later, I was flipping through my Bible and I came across **Isaiah 43:18-19:**

**"Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.**

I felt right away that this was speaking to those feelings I had been having; like God was showing me to get my eyes off the things of the world and re-focus my attention on Him.

God is working in the world, but I wasn't perceiving it. I had been allowing the cares & concerns of this world to seep in and overtake my awareness and it was causing me to feel a bit dejected and down. I wasn't perceiving what God is doing **through** all the chaos and turmoil. I was losing sight of the hopefulness that is ALWAYS found in Him.

So, as I read and reread those verses, I determined not to let the cares of this world choke out the joy & the hope in the "new things" that God is doing. Whatever this year holds- the good, the bad, and the ugly of it, as we keep our eyes on God, He will supply our needs, make a way for us, help us, provide for us, and He promises to always be with us. He loves us with an everlasting love. So, I'll make my lists and set some goals and look forward to this new year, remembering Who holds 2024 in His hands.

From the Treasurer

Scott  
Duncan

### Treasurer Report Winter 2024

*"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (Matthew 6:19-21)*

The treasure of Onesimus Ministries is the evidence of a changed life as seen in the inmates at Chester County Prison. Despite the challenging economy, the Lord has provided for the needs of this ministry by allowing our chaplains Heinrich and Rhonda to spend their time listening to the concerns of the people within the prison walls and then being able to share the gospel of Jesus Christ. We're encouraged to see the prisoners showing a hunger for God's Word especially now that the prison is allowed to have chapel services again.

Please continue to pray that the volunteers and chaplains of Onesimus would be used to help show any of these lost souls how to find the Savior and that they would be used to help encourage those that already know our Savior and Lord! If you would like to bless Onesimus in addition to your prayers you can click the "Donate Now" button on this webpage or a gift can be mailed to 145 Bethel Road, Oxford, PA 19363.

## Monday Night Fellowship

Dan  
Turley

### Established Rapport

It was a long 3-1/2 years! Being locked out of Chester County Prison for that time drove home, for me, the fragility of our ability to share the Gospel inside that institution. I am so grateful to be back "inside".

It took us a month or two to reestablish the rapport with the inmates that we once enjoyed but it is back now. The relationships are again friendly and welcoming and that makes our sharing the Good News more effective. Inmate participation in our services is high and a large group of inmates has become "regulars".

Thanks, Lord!

---

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](mailto:unsubscribe@onesimusministries.org) expressing your wishes.

God bless your day!



Onesimus Ministries  
145 Bethel Road  
Oxford, PA 19363  
[www.onesimusministries.org](http://www.onesimusministries.org)