

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

Breakfast - The Most Important Meal of the Day!

And an important meal to keep our local prison ministry running! Join us Saturday, March 1st, 9:00am at Waterway Church in Oxford for a delicious FREE breakfast. Chaplain Heinrich and Chaplain Rhonda will give a quick update, with plenty of time to bid on themed gifts in our *silent auction*.

Limited seating - Reserve your FREE tickets at <https://tithe.ly/event-registration/#/9684309>

Waterway Church is at 550 Waterway Road in Oxford ([directions](#)). See you there!

From the Chairman

Vernon
Myers

When Times Are Difficult to What Will My Soul Hold On?

I suspect every generation might have said we live in stressful times, and how can it get worse. There is the ebb and flow of continual change which all of us face. The time also comes as we get older when "the optimism of youth" gives way to "the reality and concern" of maturity. The older we get the more angst we experience.

As I thought about our changing times and the national polarity which seems to be pulling us apart, my mind went back to the lyrics of an old hymn I enjoy, entitled, **Will My Anchor Hold?** The writer picks up the image of a ship on stormy water and the absolute necessity of a secure anchor—it is quite easy to make a significant spiritual application.

*Will your anchor hold in the storms of life,
When the clouds unfold their wings of strife?
When the strong tides lift, and the cables strain,
Will your anchor drift or firm remain?*

*We have an anchor that keeps the soul Steadfast and sure while the billows roll,
Fastened to the Rock which cannot move,
Grounded firm and deep in the Savior's love.*

*It is safely moored, 'twill the storm withstand,
For 'tis well secured by the Savior's hand;
And the cables passed from His heart to mine,
Can defy the blast, through strength divine.*

All of us wish for “peaceful waters” in everyday living, but real life is not often like that for any extended period of time. Something will come to “stir up the waters” of everyday living. It might be health issues where one trip to the doctor turns your world upside down. Or you find yourself in a broken relationship not of your choosing or desire, but it has happened and you find yourself a single parent.

Or the economy has slowed and you find yourself without a job with an uncertain future at best. Or bad habits and behaviors have finally caught up with you and you find yourself or someone you care about sentenced to time in prison. Like the phrase from another song— “... *when the world you have been living in comes crashing at your feet.*”

All of us face such times when our faith is tested. You ask yourself on what will your faith rely? Will the “anchor” of your heart hold firm when “the storm clouds of life” unfold their wings of strife? Yes, it will. The answer—your heart is “safely moored” by the Savior’s hand. “*The cables passed from His heart to mine can defy the blast, through strength divine.*” There is the strength to “weather the storm.” We have an anchor that keeps the soul.

Onesimus Ministries is committed to the task of helping men and women find a heart and life change which will profoundly impact their life and living. In v. 11 in the Apostle Paul’s letter to Philemon he asks his friend Philemon to accept back a servant of his who had stolen from him and wronged him. Paul had the occasion while in prison to introduce Onesimus to the life changing good news of God’s forgiving grace. Paul asks Philemon to accept him back as a brother in the Lord.

“I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, (name means “useful”) who became my son while I was in chains. Formerly he was useless to you, but now he has become useful both to you and to me....I am sending him back to you.....no longer as a slave, but as a dear brother. He is very dear to me but even dearer to you, both as a man and as a dear brother in the Lord.” (Philemon 10-16)

Onesimus Ministries seeks to encourage our local churches to receive and assist men and women who are experiencing a life change and becoming “useful” members of our communities.

Chaplain Jottings



Heinrich
Botes

Anticipation

The word “Anticipate” is very close in meaning to the word, “Expect”.

A pregnant mother expects a child and in anticipation, the room is painted and decorated, many “just-in-case” articles are bought and stored. The rest of the family on both sides become excited with especially the grandparents showing a new spring in their step.

“*So, what does that have to do with the chaplaincy at Chester County Prison?*” you may rightfully ask.

Well, after COVID shut down the chaplaincy program in almost every conceivable way, there suddenly is an air of quiet optimism and EXPECTATION that the chaplaincy schedule will very soon be expanded dramatically. To expound on the image of the expected baby, we are preparing almost feverishly for an announcement that more slots on the weekly chapel service will be activated. Presently, there is a flurry of preparation with many churches and individual volunteers applying for security clearances and building up their teams! It’s almost like the “good old days”!

Please pray for this process as much water flowed under the bridge in the last 5 years with an entirely new leadership team in place. By God's grace, the Chaplaincy team do experience great favor but (as most mothers will know) the baby has not yet been delivered. More next time...

Chaplain Jottings



Rhonda
Soland

It Never Gets Old

As Christians, and especially if we have been followers of the Lord for some time, we know that God works in the heart of man to lead, guide, direct, and to change the course of a human life. We KNOW this. But it never gets old watching it happen. It never gets mundane or boring to watch as God works as only He can in a human heart.

With the women in the prison, I am seeing some of them who are really starting to move closer to the Lord and build a genuine relationship with Him. I see their knowledge of and familiarity with the Scriptures begin to increase. I watch as their attitudes and behaviors begin to change. I see their excitement and amazement as they see these changes in themselves or hear family members remark about the changes in them.

And I am always thrilled when they begin to tell me of the growing desires in their hearts to help others or to serve or give back in some way in their communities. They share a variety of ideas and dreams of what they could do to make a difference in some area of service. I'm always intentional about pointing out to them that this is God moving in their hearts, stirring these desires in them. The excitement and wonder on their faces is priceless to see.

We know God works in the heart, but again, it NEVER gets old to see it happen and to witness the results. I pray that He continues His work in the minds and hearts of the men and women in Chester County Prison during their time of incarceration and well beyond.

From the Treasurer

Scott
Duncan

Treasurer Report Winter 2025

Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. (2 Cor. 9:7)

Giving is part of our daily walk before the Lord. God is the greatest Giver and our great Provider and seeks to use us to provide for the needs of others. There are numerous souls in the Chester County prison who need to hear the good news of Jesus Christ. They need to hear that they are sinners before a Holy God but have the opportunity of forgiveness through Christ's sacrificial death. Not only can they be forgiven but will also have new life in Christ. When you feel led to contribute through prayer or financially to Onesimus Ministries, you will be blessed to be part of the process that gets the gospel to the inmates.

On March 1st at Waterway Church in Oxford PA you'll have the opportunity to have a free breakfast and hear how the chaplains at Onesimus reach the souls in the Chester County Prison. You'll also have the opportunity to provide support to the ongoing necessary needs of the ministry. We know the Lord loves when we give cheerfully for His purposes so may we continually search for ways to be used by God to bless others. If you're able to attend the breakfast please register online on the homepage of Onesimus Ministries.

Return On Investment

Many years ago, a wise man taught me the law of “give to get”. Not give because we want to get but getting because we want to give. He was a master of one liners and told me that “if I cast my bread upon the waters, it will come back in club sandwiches”. That has been my experience in prison ministry.

Several times over the years I have met men on the street and in stores and restaurants who were attendees in our Monday night services while they were doing time in Cheser Count Prison. Those times have been club sandwiches for me.

My return on investment is beyond anything I am able to calculate, and it continues to grow. It is my prayer that God will allow me to continue at the prison for many more years.

Goal for the New Year

A little over a month into the New Year and it's time to consider our Ministry goal for 2025. Nothing much changes when it comes to reaching the lost with the Gospel, so the goal for the Ministry hasn't really changed.

Teaching that following Jesus is not about a religion, but a relationship is our top priority. Even Believers who have been following Jesus for years can get caught up in religiosity or legalism. We can still question what do I need to add to Jesus and His finished work on the Cross for my Salvation or how do I remain in good standing with God when I mess up? We have to be reminded that we can bring and do nothing. There are multiple Scriptures that remind us of this fact and certainly Scriptures that remind us apart from Jesus we are lost and dead in our sins. This is what these guys need to hear – always!

It's important that we remember our audience. Some have a basic knowledge of Jesus; some are well-churched and there are those with little to no knowledge of Christ who are searching. Our focus needs to be on the weakest as all will benefit from those messages. We teach from the Bible God's Word, starting with the Cross – always with the Cross – and then, as appropriate, other Scriptures to encourage them in their daily walk.

My focus is to continue on this path – always! Since the prison reopened in 2023, I have held 2 trainings a year with the guys on 2nd service team. These are times of fellowship and comparing notes. What's working, what's not working, always looking to sharpen our skills. I also have the occasional coffee meetings, one-to-ones with the guys to talk about the ministry, message prep, etc. These have proven most fruitful! The relationships that have developed over the last couple of years are wonderful! These guys are my brothers and my friends!

So, all that to say there really is only one goal: to continue to preach the Gospel, keeping the message simple to reach the lost and growing closer to God and each other through the process. Praise be to our glorious King and Savior – the Lord Jesus Christ

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God bless your day!



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