



## November 2020 Newsletter Jottings

### how to help

Receive your Jottings by email - more convenient for you & it saves us on postage & materials. We'll need your email address.

Donate anytime at <http://onesimusministries.org/donate/> OR use the Donate tab on our website homepage.

Prayer!

### chaplains

Heinrich Botes  
Rhonda Soland

### executive board

Richard Chiavetta  
Andy Duncan  
Scott Duncan, Treasurer  
Andrew Leatherman  
J. Vernon Myers, Chair  
Phil Taylor, Secretary  
Dan Turley

### our mission

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

## Prison Ministry has Changed Vernon Myers

In the midst of all the COVID-19 turmoil, our family graduated two high school seniors in 2020. One with a virtual ceremony which was nice, but not what high school seniors wanted for their senior year. The other senior's graduation was postponed from June until late in the summer. For him the sense of joy of finishing this "life milestone" seemed almost anti-climactic. Our senior's comment, "I almost feel like skipping the graduation all together."

What a year it has been! COVID-19 has profoundly turned everyday activities upside down! The impact was felt at Chester County Prison as well, as you will hear in Heinrich and Rhonda's reports. Trying to prevent the spread of the virus the prison authorities needed to restrict inmates' movement throughout the prison, no family visits, no chapel services, no worship, greatly reduced contact with staff, including the chaplains Heinrich and Rhonda. Outside church groups and Monday Night Fellowship are not permitted to conduct services in the chapel. So life at Chester County Prison is anything but normal.

Despite the necessary changes, Heinrich reports that inmates and staff have expressed deep appreciation that he was there every day. They expressed their thanks to see the chaplain adjusting to life brought on by the challenge of COVID-19. Prison ministry has changed.

Not only changes to life at Chester County Prison, COVID has impacted those of you who are our loyal supporters. We needed to cancel our annual Spring fund raising dinner. While we depend on our annual dinner as a wonderful time of worship and joy, we were not sure how it would impact our financial support for 2020. God has been good and He has provided through the faithful support of all of us.

But COVID has caused us to adapt. We are looking for new ways to support Onesimus Ministry. Please read carefully the article on page three from our secretary, Phil Taylor, since we are working on an online-giving option from our website :<http://onesimusministries.org/donate/>

Great News

P. S. Since we invited churches, families, groups, and individuals to donate a box of Life Recovery Bibles we have had fifteen boxes (15) of LRB donated for use at Chester County Prison. How very wonderful these gifts are. We also ordered two Spanish translations of the Life Recovery Bibles.

Those who have donated Bibles in 2020, are invited to do so again in 2021. \$128 covers a case of 16 Bibles.

Earmark your contributions as 2021 LRB and send to 145 Bethel Road, Oxford, PA 19363

**Thank you.!**

## Chaplain Jottings

Heinrich Botes

### God Does Prison Ministry Better Than We Do

It is now widely acknowledged that persecution and restrictions, contrary to human reasoning and expectations, enabled the ‘under-ground’ church in oppressed nations to flourish. The Holy Spirit entered homes and hearts in an unprecedented manner to produce fruit...*“fruit that will last”*...to quote Jesus in John 15:16.

I believe God may be doing something similar at Chester County Prison despite the COVID-related restrictions that changed prison ministry as we knew it. Below are but a few extracts taken from Inmate Request Forms sent to me since March 2020. I quote them verbatim while giving all the honor and glory to God.

“I got shot in the face in December....still have the bullet in my head. ‘God’s trying to tell me something’ is what I told myself but didn’t search for Him. This is the first time and with your help I’m finding Him more every day. In the Lord, Jesus Christ.”

“Thank you for everything...you have opened something up inside of me that was never there before”.

“Thank you for serving God – without people such as yourself being so willing to dedicate your time to our searches for God within these walls, our personal efforts may otherwise be lost or reach a plateau much too soon.”

“I would like to learn how to read the Bible and find something greater than myself. I’m 43 and have been walking through life blind.”

“The correspondence you sent me made such a significant impact on the growing of my faith as well as bringing me to magnificent joy and peace that means so much in adverse times as this for me.”

“I love The Life Recovery Bible that you sent down (to Maximum Security). It now is my favorite version.”

“I received ‘William Carey, Father of Modern Missions’ from you. I devoured it in about 8 hours.”

“I want any type of inspirational books that I can borrow to hopefully help me understand and accept a relationship with Christ Jesus. In my heart I want it so bad, but my mind is in the way”

After reading this would you agree with me that God does prison ministry better than us?

Please pray for us and thank you for your support to keep us here.



## Chaplain Jottings

Rhonda Soland

As we move into our 7th month under the Covid-19 related restrictions at Chester County Prison: no church services, no Bible studies or other classes, no gatherings of any kind, and extremely limited inmate contact, written communication has become very important. Our faithful volunteers, who of course, are not allowed entrance for the time being, have been writing letters of encouragement and sending in devotional writings, Bible studies, testimonies, puzzles, and coloring pages, as a way of maintaining connection with the women and continuing to minister to them. Our distribution list of women receiving correspondence from our volunteers represents over half the female population of the prison.

We are also receiving more requests for Bibles, devotional books, study books and books on Christian living, as these are now the main source of spiritual input for the residents. One interesting thing we are finding is that, not being able to speak face to face with us chaplains, the men and women are writing and expressing themselves more freely and fully on their request forms. I would like to include a few examples here.

One young woman wrote recently: “Please could you send me a Bible? And if you have any other reference materials that you can send, that would be great. My cellmate asked me about prayer and the Bible. She said she never went to church and doesn’t know if she has ever been saved. I tried to speak to her about it. If you have anything that could help explain God, prayer, or being saved to a new Christian, that would be awesome. I grew up in church, but I’m not the best with words, tho. Anything you can do would be so appreciated.”

Another woman wrote: “I have been a little down lately. Being locked in the cell 22 hours a day everyday weighs on your mental health. Thank you so much for the devotional book you sent me. It really seems to help. I read it everyday, along with Bible study and daily prayer. God is Great! I wish we had church and Bible study or one-on-ones. Hopefully soon. I pray all is well with you and you’re staying safe out there. I will continue to pray for you and ask if you could continue to pray for me also J. ”

Even in things that might seem to be a lesser concern, the women are reaching out. One woman wrote, “Would you mind praying with me for my dog, Alphie? That he knows I’m not abandoning him & that he’s not being neglected without me. I’m so sad. I miss my dog!”

It seems ironic to me that in this time when many of the women seem more open and willing to hear about spiritual things, we are cut off from them and not able to communicate easily with them. But I know that God is still able to make His grace abound to them, even in the middle of a pandemic.



## Virtual Thanksgiving Banquet

Phil Taylor

We always try to live by Paul's sage advice to "*Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.*" 1 Thessalonians 5:18 (NLT) However, with Thanksgiving Day imminent, this ministry is especially grateful to all our benefactors. Your generosity has enabled our chaplains to continue to minister to the men and women at Chester County Prison even in the midst of the pandemic that has stopped all religious volunteers at CCP for more than 7 months...and counting.

Our Lord has providentially sustained this ministry even without our primary source of funding – the Onesimus banquet held each year in early April. Rather than putting God to the test by ignoring this shortfall, we do appeal for a year-end gift to offset the usual banquet contributions...a virtual banquet if you will. Not only will your faithfulness enable Heinrich and Rhonda to continue their shepherding of those at CCP, any surplus will help to make their dreams of after-care a reality, i.e. an outreach to help ex-inmates walk closely with the Lord on the outside and to avoid becoming another statistic in the vicious cycle of recidivism.

So, **we'd be exceedingly grateful if you would prayerfully consider making a gift** in the envelope enclosed with is newsletter. If you'd prefer to give online, kindly use our donation platform at: <http://onesimusministries.org/donate/> or use the "Donate" tab found on our homepage where you will find a link to easily and securely give via the Tithe.ly app, or it can be downloaded to your phone, tablet or computer. Merely call, write, or drop an email to [giving@onesimusministries.org](mailto:giving@onesimusministries.org) if you need any assistance in donating or to request prepaid envelopes for giving monthly, quarterly, or even intermittently. Naturally, or more appropriately, supernaturally, any consideration of a legacy or estate gift would be welcomed.

Our chaplains, would also be delighted to speak with any churches who might consider partnering with us in planting God's "fields." While we have almost 300 churches in the county that we

regularly send this newsletter to, only a handful...less than ten...contribute financially to this ministry to men and women who come to CCP from throughout all of Chester County. So, any and all organizations' support in funds, resources, or as a welcoming church home to a released inmate would be so beneficial and so very welcome.

On behalf of the chaplains and of the board, we wish a most blessed Thanksgiving and CHRISTmas season to all who have help make such a difference in the lives of so many for so many years.

As a former "resident" of CCP in the late 90s, I can personally attribute the 180 degree turn in my earthly life and the eternal destiny of myself and several of my children, directly to the Good News I heard there, and the nurturing of that faith, directly through this ministry and volunteers during the eight months I spent in Chester County Prison. Words are simply inadequate to express my gratitude to all of you who made all of that possible, but nonetheless, thank you!!!

## Monday Night Fellowship

Dan Turley

(Due to COVID, all family visits and church gathering in the chapel have stopped. Thus, outside volunteers have not been permitted to go inside.)

The Old Testament is filled with weak and insecure people God used for his purposes. Moses comes to mind and his calling is recounted in Exodus chapter 3. Standing before the burning bush on Mount Horeb God gives Moses his marching orders but Moses is not eager to follow them. He uses every excuse he could think of: I am nobody, who shall I say sent me?, they won't believe me, I am not an eloquent speaker, and finally he gets to what he really wants to say: Send Somebody Else! After all his protestations he finally hears the one word he does not want to hear: GO! Moses was not a coward. He just understood clearly that he was not capable in himself of doing what God clearly had in mind. He could not see himself getting the results God wanted. He was right, but Exodus records that he did exactly what God sent him to do. That message is for those of us in prison ministry too. We're not capable of getting the results God wants either. We have to remind ourselves that God does not call men expecting results. He calls expecting effort. We are not responsible for results. That is God's domain. Our responsibility is simply to GO! He will take care of the rest.

Wouldn't It Be Nice?

## A Repeat of Our 2020 Invitation

Would it not be nice? An invitation.....

Would it not be nice if we could supply Life Recovery Bibles as a resource for the chaplains at Chester County Prison to give to those who are serious about putting their lives in order? We have a wonderful opportunity to provide a life-altering resource which goes to the "heart issue," offering hope for a better future for the residents and their families.

### A Need/Opportunity/Testimony – Rhonda Soland, chaplain

We have been using the Life Recovery Bible for the past three years at Chester County Prison and they remain very popular with men and women alike. The feedback we have received has been tremendous. The LRB uses the easy-to-read, easy-to-understand New Living Translation, which is a big help to the inmates we serve. Since the majority of the incarcerated residents have some history with substance abuse, the recovery theme of the LRB makes it especially ideal to use in the prison setting. Another big plus with this Bible is the excellent study notes that are included on every page, helping the men and women learn to apply the Bible's Truths to their lives. Here is a sampling of the feedback we have received:

"I love this Bible and it's so much easier to read and understand for me. This is the Bible that got me thru rehab." - Jolene

"The Life Recovery Bible has meant so much to me while being here, and without it I would be lost. Thank you very much. My cellmate would really like one. I've been sharing how wonderful this one is to me and I believe it would help her as well." - Mary

We would be so grateful if you would help us to keep a supply of these Life Recovery Bibles available to the residents of CCP. We have a 60% off arrangement with Tyndale House, the publisher of the Bible, which means a cost of \$128 per case.

Our desire is for churches (or individuals or groups) to "sponsor" a case of 16 — meaning, a donation to Onesimus of \$128.00 would provide a constant supply of Bibles coming into the prison for every month of the year.

We hope you will prayerfully consider helping us keep the Word of God available to the men and women of Chester County Prison. Thank you!

### An Invitation – Andy Leatherman, member of the Board

We would appreciate if you or your church would be willing to "clip and return" the form below to sponsor a box of Bibles. The first 12 returns will cover the next 12 months going forward.

-----clip and return to Onesimus Ministries, 145 Bethel Road, Oxford, PA 19363-----

Count me/us in for a box of Bibles. Donation of \$128.00 for a box of Life Recovery Bibles.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for the opportunity.

# 40 Years of Sharing God's Love at Chester County Prison

For your convenience and to save on hardcopy costs,  
please ask for this newsletter to be delivered straight to your email inbox.



145 Bethel Road  
Oxford, PA 19363