

Onesimus Ministries, Inc.

145 Bethel Road • Oxford, PA 19363 • 610-932-4429 • <http://OnesimusMinistries.org>



Spring 2020 Newsletter Jottings

How You Can Help

Receive your Jottings by email - more convenient for you & it saves us on postage & materials.

Attend the Spring Banquet in the Fall !!

Donate anytime.

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.”

Wouldn't It Be Nice?

Vernon Myers

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 publishers of the Bible, which means a cost of \$128 per case.

Our desire is for churches (or individuals) 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. My/Our donation of \$128 is enclosed.

Name _____

Contact Info _____

Chaplain Jottings

Heinrich Botes

There is something I need to tell you...actually two things:

First, God is at work at Chester County Prison among inmates and staff and, secondly, that you, the reader, play an incredibly important role in the outreach to these 1,000 incarcerated souls and those who care for them.



God is working not only among the inmates but also among the staff at Chester County Prison. One mother of a former inmate recently started making regular monthly financial contributions to the chaplaincy; not only because of what the chaplaincy service meant for her son, but because of another reason that totally surprised me.

We spoke about how God is drawing inmates to Himself from different religious persuasions and denominations... including Buddhism, Judaism and (equally miraculously) backsliders from a lukewarm “Christianity”!

As I explained to her, there are “secret” or “stealth” believers among the staff and that God is also working among the staff. She exclaimed, “To be quite honest, that’s actually the reason why I started donating to the chaplaincy...I saw the change in the attitude of the staff and how it contrasted from a few years ago when I had to visit my son at CCP.” She continued, “The last time I drove out of the prison, I said to myself, ‘There is something going on in this place, even among the staff...they are so polite and patient.’”

What a great testimony and great encouragement to us who work here every day. “Thank you” for praying, “thank you” for giving money. But also “thank you” for encouraging the chaplaincy team here at Chester County Prison. We are honored to represent you in this part of God’s vineyard. We also want you to know you are highly regarded and without you this work may come to a grinding halt. Pray for us as you are reminded.

Chaplain Jottings

Rhonda Soland

Even though fall is by far my favorite season, with its spectacular colors and cooling temperatures, there is definitely something about spring that brings excitement and a sense of hope. When those first bright flowers begin to appear and the first pale green leaves sprout on the trees, it seems to awaken something in our own souls—the expectation of new life.



Spring is a season of revival, when what was so long dead, or dormant, comes back to life. If winter is the “old man,” then spring is the newborn, bringing with it all the excitement and hope of a brand-new start.

It is very appropriate then, that at this time of year, we are seeing the seeds of hope that have long been planted through the chaplaincy program of Chester County Prison begin to sprout. We are continuing to see a growing spiritual hunger among the residents, men and women. Practically every day there is another report:

- one of the residents has given her life to the Lord,
- a correctional officer asks for prayer,
- another asks for a Bible,
- an inmate who has been incarcerated in CCP 15 times comes sincerely seeking to know God and is ready to turn her life around,
- women telling of the peace they feel when they read their Bibles and encouraging others to come to church with them, talking about the positive changes they’ve begun to notice in themselves.
- So many stories, all speaking of men and women hungry for hope.

As God continues to do His work in the hearts of those at CCP, we want to thank you for coming along side us, supporting our efforts through your faithful prayers and giving. It makes such a difference and we are so grateful. And please, please pray with us that God will have His way in Chester County Prison and that we will see more and more men and women, both residents and staff, coming to the only source of true Hope for their lives. Especially at this time, when there is so much uncertainty and fear in our world, our God stands as a beacon of hope. Pray that more and more will come to see “the light” and turn and place their trust in Him.

I look forward to seeing many of you at the upcoming Banquet in the Fall and sharing with you more stories of the faithful work of our God. Thank you again for your prayers and support.

ONESIMUS MINISTRIES BANQUET

HAS BEEN POSTPONED
TO SOMETIME IN THE
FALL, 2020

Unexpected Grace

Andy Duncan

Serving in Prison Ministry is incredibly challenging at times. There are those unexpected moments of anger from an inmate, blatant disregard for the ground rules and sadness at seeing and hearing about so much emotional and physical pain and suffering. There is also great joy in this Ministry as we experience much time in God's Word preparing for our messages, listening to the encouraging testimonies from men whose lives are being touched by God and, on those rare but joyful occasions, seeing a newly returning citizen attend your church or hear about them getting plugged and doing well in all areas of life.

I recently had an interesting encounter with some inmates that left me concerned about the integrity of our Ministry, yet wanting to remain honest and transparent. The result was not what I expected and I am grateful in so many ways for God's mercy and kindness in touching all our hearts.

At the beginning of the service, I gently request that there be no sidebar conversations during service. I explain that this is to show courtesy and respect for where they are, why they are there and that the majority of men want to engage God and worship Him. God is the main reason we are there and He is to be respected. I also tell them they may hear something that not only can change their life, but can save their life. I do tell them after one warning it will be necessary to call a CO and have them removed if they fail to obey. We try to extend grace as much as possible so that they see we are different than the environment they are currently in.

On this particular evening, two men continued in a conversation after my opening request. I warned them twice, but to no avail. I went and got a CO to escort them out as is protocol. One of them became very angry, denied he was talking and then told me in somewhat unpleasant

terms that he and his buddy were talking about the Word – God's Word – and that I should have asked them what they were discussing before I had them removed. They missed the point that any conversation, regardless of topic is disruptive. Being trained not to engage in disputes, I did not reply as they were escorted out. I hated to do it, but it needed to be done.

About two minutes later I felt a tap on my shoulder and turned to see an inmate asking me if I could speak with him in the back of the room. I thought he may have wanted to discuss the removal of the two guys; however, there was a sense of urgency about him. I was blown away by our conversation. This man had led a very troubled life and told me he was struggling to believe in God. However, he felt that something was changing. I shared the Gospel with him and encouraged him to check out our church in Downingtown. He said I would see him on Sunday as he was scheduled for release the next day, which he felt was a miracle.

As I headed back to my seat I became very convicted (guilty) that I had just violated my own rules! Here I was, having a conversation during the message. I had some "splainin' to do Lucy." I'm grateful I can chuckle about it now. But it was very unsettling at the time.

The next week as I introduced the service I told the story to the men, many of course, had been there the previous week. I told them I was a hypocrite and could offer no good explanation or excuse. I reiterated the rule about talking and said I don't know what to say about my conduct.

One of the men raised his hand and said, "You were doing what you came in here to do. Minister to us. It's all good!" Wow!! Talk about mixed emotions.

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From the Treasurer

Scott Duncan

What a privilege it is for me to serve as treasurer of Onesimus Ministries, taking the place of Roy Fite. My name is Scott Duncan and I'm from Oxford, PA. I previously worked in the accounting department at Herr Foods along with Roy Fite. During our time at Herr's, Roy and I (along with a few others) would have a Bible study during our lunch hour and our group became very close. Roy also mentioned his involvement with Onesimus Ministries and invited me to their annual banquet at Mt. Vernon. Since the

first time I attended the banquet, I knew this ministry was a true work of the Lord and I was happy to give what I could towards their efforts. Last year the board of Onesimus asked me if I would be willing to be the treasurer for them after Roy's home call to be with the Lord. After much prayer and thought I felt the Lord leading me to join Onesimus beginning in 2020 for which I am thankful and privileged. Please pray that I'll be able to continue the great job that Roy did while he served His Savior the Lord Jesus Christ.

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The main one was gratitude – to God for His grace in the moment, the reminder and encouragement of why we are there. This man truly appreciated our presence and I believe it is an awesome reminder that we do make a difference! It can be so discouraging at times when we have no idea what, if any, fruit we are producing and how often have we been told by a returning citizen that he will see us at our church on Sunday and we never see him again.

I am encouraged and at times tell the men, I hope I never see you in here again. I tell them it would be a huge blessing to see them on the outside plugged in to a good church and thriving, but mostly it is my prayer that more of these guys than I'll ever realize on this side of Heaven will be standing next to me worshipping God for eternity!

Visit us on the internet!
www.OnesimusMinistries.org