



Summer 2022 Newsletter Jottings

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chaplains

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Rhonda Soland

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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.”

How Do We Answer “Honest Questions” From a “Serious Inquiry?”

Vernon Myers

“WHAT IS GOD? AND WHERE DID HE COME FROM?
“WHO IS HIS FATHER? SHOULD I BE SCARED OF HIM OR IT?
“ARE THESE STORIES IN THE BIBLE TALL TALES?

“I AM REALLY TRYING HARD, BUT THE MORE I READ AND DISCUSS THE BIBLE THE MORE I CAN’T UNDERSTAND. I MAY BE TOO CLOSED MINDED AND/OR AFRAID. I WORRY THAT I WONT BE ABLE TO EVER GET IT.

“I UNDERSTAND LOVE BECAUSE IT HAS BEEN GIVEN TO ME AND I KNOW WHAT UNCONDITIONAL LOVES FEELS LIKE TO GET AND GIVE BECAUSE OF MY FAMILY AND MY BEAUTIFUL CHILDREN. IS THAT GOD?

“THESE QUESTIONS ARE REAL AND I UNDERSTAND THAT THEY MIGHT SOUND CHILDISH, BUT IF YOU COULD HELP ME, I WOULD APPRECIATE YOUR INPUT. THANKS.

“THANK YOU FOR THE BEAUTIFUL BIBLE.

What you just read are real questions of an honest mind and heart from someone desperately wanting to know and understand the spiritual truths of life. Chaplain Rhonda reported at our last board meeting she received a request form asking the questions. How shall we respond to these questions? Can we help this person find answers in the Bible she was given?

These questions put us on a search to find some help for her. Part of our search has taken us to booklets about Biblical truth from ServeNow. ServeNow is a mission agency headquartered in Denver, Colorado, offering hope to people who are most vulnerable. Part of their significant ministry is providing leadership training for local pastors to help their people, through the use of 30 booklets in a Basic Series set, which provides basic teaching about God and Jesus, as well as on subjects such as prayer, Bible study, worship, and other Christian-based interests.

Chaplain Jottings

Heinrich Botes

Faithful Over These Few Things

Faithfulness, the definition of this word and its application on prison ministry is so much more relevant than ever before. The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines faithfulness as “firm in adherence to promises or in observance of duty”.

Jesus concludes a parable in Matthew 25:23 with these words: *“His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’”*

Ministry to prisoners across the globe has been shaken to its very core by the strange developments since 2020. The chapel at Chester County Prison, just



like in all other prisons, is not in use, and approved religious volunteers who have been serving for decades are not allowed access. This is unprecedented... a word that is sadly used far too often to describe the days we’re living in.

We’re hearing reports of prison volunteers “moving on,” of dwindling financial support and hardly any invitations to speak in Sunday services. Does this also impact prayer support and “visiting those in prison” with sympathy, compassion, love, and notes of support? This is a frightening realization... we as chaplains could be on our own!

But, God forbid, we as Onesimus Ministry volunteers and supporters should fall into this trap of being unfaithful when the “winds of time are contrary,” as happened in Matthew 14:24.

Whether you’re a chaplain, a prison volunteer or “only” a supporter of prison ministry, now is the time to display impeccable “faithfulness” over the few things for which our Master made us responsible. What are these few things Jesus Christ expects from you regarding ministry to those incarcerated?

Have you been, or rather, are you faithful “over these few things”?

Chaplain Jottings

Rhonda Soland

As we head into our 3rd year of Covid restrictions, the temptation is to wonder if we will ever get back to “normal”. Will we ever be able to gather for services in our chapel again? Will we ever be able to meet with the residents face to face to offer encouragement and spiritual guidance and to look them in the eye and let them know that there is a God Who created them, Who loves them and has a plan for their lives, no matter what they’ve done or where they’ve been? Will I ever again be able to meet freely with the women, learn their names, hear their stories, and point them in the direction of One Who wants to walk with them throughout their lives? It feels like the answer to these questions is in doubt, but, at some point, we will get back to gathering for chapel services and meeting for spiritual counseling. When that will be is not known to us; God is in control of the details. And while we have been hampered in our ability to minister, He has not been deterred at all. God is still hard at work in Chester County Prison. Even without church services, there are a number of women who are striving and growing in



their faith. They are reading their Bibles, spending time in prayer, journaling, and pursuing growth, understanding, and knowledge. I receive written correspondence from them requesting study materials, asking questions about faith, and expressing their desire to grow closer to God.

A recent example of such correspondence that I received is from a woman who was very distraught and troubled a few weeks ago when we met briefly. She was anxious and worried about her circumstances, but now wrote saying, “I have been struggling with feeling isolated – and have tried to fill those moments with prayers out loud, to feel more connected to Him.” She also wrote, “My prayer is that I use this time to glorify Him and deepen my relationship with Him, His Word, and spiritual leaders like you, so that I might be put to good use in celebrating God’s Kingdom.” A very beautiful expression of desire to grow in God. Another woman wrote to me, “I really am so thankful to get back in touch with God – a journey I started many years ago but lost my way. I’m excited for this new chapter of my life with God by my side.”

This is the work that God is doing in Chester County Prison. We are hindered, but He is not. I am not able to freely meet with the women, but that is not a problem for Him. He meets with them.

This time of Covid restrictions at CCP will be over at some point, but through it all, nothing has been lost; ministry is still happening and those who are seeking are still finding.

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Rhonda gave the woman who asked these honest questions the booklet entitled, “Basic Things You Should Know About God.” After reading it, she wrote in reply:

“I loved the booklet and appreciated the thought behind it. Yes, it’s informative and it was really cool to know exactly where the Scripture came from in the whole context. I love reading the Bible and learning about our God, Jesus, and the history behind this Book. I can even hear myself changing and feel myself evolving with a deeper understanding of God & Jesus & His teachings.

I have so many more questions, but I am not afraid of God, I talk to Him now in my own way throughout my day. He is with me. He is for me always! Can’t wait till our next meeting and thank you!”

What a wonderful response! The Lord willing, we will be purchasing some of the booklets as a resource for others to experience a deeper understanding of God’s forgiving and enabling grace.

Banquet Alert!

**Mark your calendar for the
Onesimus Ministries Banquet
Friday evening 6:30, October 28
at Mt. Vernon Christian Church,
1 Lighthouse Drive, Kirkwood, PA**

RSVP today at

info@onesimusministries.org

or call 610-932-4429

*Thank you for
your support!*

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

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