



# SOMEONE CARES PRISON MINISTRY NEWSLETTER



Vol. 2014 No. 4

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Quietly Changing Lives

## Visit our web site:

[www.someonecares.org](http://www.someonecares.org)

Become a Pen Friend

(Register on line!)

See Don and Yvonne

Catch up on back issues

Send us Email (see below)

IT IS REALLY TRUE  
GOD LOVES YOU.

BECAUSE OF YOU,  
SOMEONE CARES.

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## SATAN MUST BE ANGRY

Like many of you we have had a long, cold, snowy winter and we've experienced some unfortunate incidents as a result of the heavy ice. Our car slid into a snow bank, and it took some work to get it out, but fortunately there was no damage. A truck backed into Ronna's vehicle, and there was a little damage. Jake had a city bus run him over, with minor damage to him (he was hurt a little), but it totaled his car. Yvonne slipped on ice and had to have back surgery, and she's slowly recovering. Lots of love and prayers are needed as we all move forward.

## WE ARE HAVING A PERPLEXING TIME WITH MAIL



We've been having trouble with mail not getting to us and not getting to you. We still have problems with letters not being addressed with the right address or pen name. While we were recently confined indoors due to being surrounded by snow, I spent quite a bit of time working on names in the computer. When we match an inmate with the pen friend, we have them fill out a personal information form and send it back. Thirty-three potential pen friends did not send forms back. Forty-seven folks requesting to get involved were matched and were sent information, but none of them wrote to the matched inmate, nor did they send the information back. Some mail was sent to the wrong folks, which we take the blame for and will try harder to not have that happen. If we had all your phone numbers we could correct problems more quickly. Please send us your updated address and/or phone information for our records.

## IGNORANCE IS BLISS? I THINK NOT.

The problems of the day, including drugs, alcohol and sex abuse, are problems that many pastors have little or no training in.

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## HIS NAME IS JOHN

I got a call from a correctional officer telling me about an inmate named John, who had been one of the worst inmates they had. He was a gang member, drug user and fighter who had stabbed two inmates during his time in prison. About three years prior to this, John's mom had called, asking for help for her son. I wrote to John myself for about a year, then got him a Pen Friend who began writing and also had their whole family join in. He took a couple of Bible studies and accepted Christ. John's mom called me and said they visited him, something they had quit doing, but now they could not believe the change in him. I called the Chaplain and he said John attended all the chapel services. Prison Ministry is crime prevention! Thank you, Jesus.



*Christ Is Risen*

## IT TAKES A CHURCH

**Our Ministry Works.** Many people are aware that we have a prison ministry program that works. I am amused that so many churches will refer inmates to us, but not many will become involved when we ask them to. They know that we are able to supply letter writers (however, we are in need 500 more). We can supply Bible studies (over a million inmates have finished them). Many of you live near a prison - wouldn't it be nice if we could get folks to visit inmates already involved in our Ministry? God cares for us 24 hours a day, but how many of our hours do we give to Him? In the Book of Life where our names are written, what does it say about what we do? No, we will always say that we do not like crime and we realize that some of these people are hopeless. But I was one of them that was not hopeless, and God sent Yvonne to change my path. You can read the rest of the story in our archived newsletters on our website.

**We Need More Writers.** One way to recruit more letter writers is to get our message out on the radio. Many of you came to us through VOP's radio broadcast. Please help us by writing VOP to request that they put us on the air again. You can write to them via email from their website Contact page, at [www.vop.com](http://www.vop.com). Or write by mail to Voice of Prophecy, Box 53055, Los Angeles, CA 90053.

**Wrong Number.** About ten years ago I got a call that was a wrong number. It was from a Pastor who was looking for an inmate. Since then, that Pastor has had his church write to inmates through our Program.

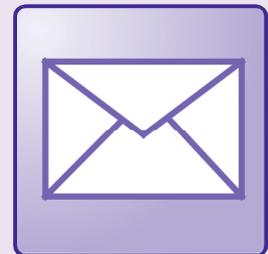
**Let's Work Together.** We are always looking for ways to improve, and would welcome suggestions that any of you may have. We also like to receive new content for our Newsletter, so please send us stories and poems from your inmate that we can include.

## YOU'VE GOT EMAIL

Handwritten letters seem to be a thing of the past. It will be extra work, but since so many folks today are computer friendly we are willing to let pen friends email their inmate. It will work like this — you send an email letter starting with your inmate's name, number and address. We will trim your email info off and snail mail the letter to the inmate (we pay the postage). When the inmate responds we can scan their letter (as soon as we get a scanner),

and email it to you.

One pen friend, George, emails letters to 25 inmates. He writes one base letter then personalizes it for each inmate. He also sends us a monthly check to cover the cost of postage, and it has worked well. Inmates do not have computers.





## POLITICS

I don't care if we are republican or democrat, but what the government is doing is such a shame. The money wasted on incarceration is staggering. Someone's brain storm was to make sentences longer to prevent crime. This did not work, and instead we now have thousands of geriatric inmates and massive medical costs.

When a person goes to prison, the following is what happens in many cases. First of all, they are placed in a prison that could be 500 miles away from where they committed the crime. Let's say they spend ten years in prison, at a cost of over \$60,000 per year. During that time most have no job, no schooling and no rehabilitation. Most have lost touch with family, or family does not want them, or it is impossible to visit due to the distance. When paroled they must return to the county where the crime was committed. However, they just spent the last ten years receiving no skills or training, have no money, no job to go to and usually no place to stay. Is it any wonder that when they get out they are desperate and commit another crime? Then, back to prison they go.

Prison Ministry can be crime prevention. When we started we had re-entry programs to help inmates. We provided clothes and some training. If an inmate comes out of minimum custody and is not violent, re-entry into a group home or ranch would be a good idea. Since it costs so much to house prisoners, one suggestion we made in California to save money was that instead of giving out \$200 release money, they could be given \$1000.00 for staying out of prison for a year. One man named Paul spent eleven years in prison, during which time he did odd jobs and saved \$700.00. When he was released we gave him free clothes, and the State gave him \$100 at the gate and another \$100 when he reported to the parole office. He had no job, no family and was an ex-convict. He built a lean to and spent seven months in it. Finally he landed a job at a car wash and was able to make it. Recidivism (returning to prison) is about 70% because the system does not work. During the Iraq war a friend of ours suggested that the government use thousands of trained, non-violent crime inmates to fight for our country. This is something you might want to talk to your senator about.

## WENT TO LUNCH AT DENNY'S

While having lunch one day I overheard a conversation about a couple's son being sent to prison far away. He is a now out of prison, is a Pen Friend himself, and is financially supporting his parents. Whenever we meet someone we tell them what we do and why. God blessed me with Yvonne, she took me to the foot of the Cross, and Jesus took me into His heart. God has given us the opportunity through Someone Cares to serve Him, and that has been successful, but we need lots of help to grow and to support that growth.

Anyone can be called by God to do His work. God can do miracles, and can change even the hardest heart. I used to wonder, why me? I smoked three packs of cigarettes a day, drank at least a fifth of booze a day, and took whatever pills I could get my hands on. I quit school in grammar school and lived for the motto, "live fast, die young and have a good looking corpse." Today at 80 I have gotten rid of the need for Insulin and only take a minor pill for diabetes. My doctor wonders how I never had any childhood or adult health problems except for my eyes. (I will not be driving much longer.)



**PLEASE DON'T . . .**

Do not send anything to the prison (other than your letter and personal photos) without first checking with us or the prison. We have received complaints from prisons about things that have been sent that are not allowed. Sometimes they return the items, but often times they do not. We have a box of used books (which are not allowed) that are too expensive to return.

**PLEASE DO . . .**

Pray that God sends us 500 folks to write men and women in prison who have been waiting for someone who cares. The need is great. Please spread the word, and let everyone know what a blessing is in store for those who participate in this risk free program.

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I've spoken with over 100 folks in the last year whose problems were real but they had no place to go for help. Another large problem we run into is getting inmates baptized, as most pastors are not interested in helping inmates. We have been discussing the idea of a "Two-Care Program" where free folks would go to prisons and visit inmates that have taken Bible studies and want to be baptized. Baptism in prison is not easy, and we encourage inmates with short sentences to wait until they get out and can join a church.

**A LONG TIME AGO**

I was a new volunteer at Soledad Prison, teaching the Bible along the way as I learned it. Because of my background, I drew quite a large crowd when I taught. At first Yvonne did not come, saying I was called by Jesus but she was not.

All our studies started with a song service. We had an old black preacher leading the songs and no pianist. One Friday I begged Yvonne to come with me to play the piano. She agreed, but only if I threw in a dinner. We arrived and Yvonne was an instant hit, but very firm. The song service lasted longer than usual, then we had Bible study which went well. The inmates were allowed to ask questions with one rule - if I did not know an answer I would have it for them the next week. (I really learned the Bible this way).

That night as we left it was pouring rain outside. Our car was a long walk away and we both got soaked. When I started the car and turned on the lights, there were all the inmates standing in the pouring rain, waving good bye. Yvonne felt the call from God that night. There were 900 men on that yard and soon Yvonne became their chaplain. Soledad is where Yvonne started the Dress out Program, remedial reading using the Bible, and later the Pen Friend Program, aka Paper Sunshine, began at San Quentin.

**IN THE PRESENT**

Now, almost 40 years later, Yvonne and I are still called to do His work, but we are slowing down and need your help. I've been asked if I am ever going to quit, as I will be 81 soon. When Jesus comes I'll stop. Or perhaps I'll go before He returns, but Someone Cares will still be here. But before I go, and with enough help, I hope to finally take Yvonne on that vacation or honeymoon that we have never had.

May God bless you and yours,  
Don, Yvonne, Ronna & Jake

**CANADIAN PEN FRIENDS:**

Please send cash, as we can really use it.  
The rate of exchange by banks here is terrible.