



# SOMEONE CARES PRISON MINISTRY NEWSLETTER



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Quietly Changing Lives

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IT IS REALLY TRUE  
GOD LOVES YOU.

BECAUSE OF YOU,  
SOMEONE CARES.

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ministry, supported by God's love  
and your gifts. It is a non-profit  
corporation; all donations are  
tax-deductible.

## WHAT WOULD JESUS SAY?



What would Jesus say about the Christmas holiday celebrated in our society today? As Christians we should celebrate His birth every day, especially in these troubled times.

Before Yvonne came into my life there

was no Jesus, so Christmas time meant "party time." Then I received the gift of Jesus and received the most important gift of all - Him. We have spent a lot of Christmas Eves and days with inmates inside prison. While on the outside it is a time to celebrate, but for those on the inside who have lost their freedom, this becomes a sad day. God gave all the gift of eternal freedom with the birth of Jesus. A great joy of this season for us is hearing from those who found Jesus through this Ministry and through all of you.

This is one of the few times of year that we can "get away with" speaking to others about the good news of our Lord's birth. Use this Christmas season to encourage your pen friend inmates, and to show those around you the joy you have as a result of the best Christmas gift you've ever received - Jesus, and eternal life through Him!

Somehow, not only for Christmas,  
But all the long year through,  
The joy that you give to others  
Is the joy that comes back to you.  
And the more you spend in blessing  
The poor and lonely and sad,  
The more of your heart's possessing  
Returns to you glad.

*John Greenleaf Whittier*

# Letters



## I'M HAPPY TODAY - JESUS TOOK MY SINS AWAY

I was sitting on my bunk thinking of what I had done to my life, my family and friends. Thirty years! I would be sixty (*when out of prison*), most of my family gone.

Hearing a female voice say, "Hi, I'm Yvonne, Jesus sent me" was a shock. She told me about their Ministry and offered me free Christmas cards with stamps. Why? Her husband joined her, and they shared how I could receive freedom even in here. I shared my family with them. They shared with me the family of God and invited me to join. I did and about a year later really did. I still have a long time to serve. My dad died but Jesus took my troubles away.

Jim Strain

## IT WAS CHRISTMAS DAY AT AVENAL PRISON

I was in the hole for stabbing another inmate. A guard pulled me out and took me to the nearby office. I was cuffed to a chair and left to wait. A bit later I met the Chaplain, Don. What a job he had that day. My two brothers were killed in a gang fight in Watts. No, I did not cry, we all expected that outcome. This stranger took the time to allow me to call home.

"Son," he said, "There is a better way to live and a better future for you." No, I'm here (in prison) and will be back if I get out, I said. "Why?" he asked me. It's just how it is, I said. "Your Grandma taught you better," he told me. How did he know? Yes, as a kid I spent days in church. "Did you ever meet Jesus?" he asked. I told him no, I went through the motions. I was a member of the BGF (Black Guerrilla Family) and bound by their code. He told me that on his way to die Jesus met someone who helped him carry the cross to his death. When HE died, Jesus fulfilled a promise to set me free. It took two years, a couple of Pen Friends, and a Bible study through Breath of Life, and I met Jesus.

In two years I will go home. I lost two cousins and my dad since I met Don. I pray God will give me the means to minister for Him in Watts. I will remember Christmas as my "birthday."

Odis Brown

*(He was only nineteen when we first met.)*

## WHY WON'T THEY WRITE?

I belong to a large church, and I have shared, asked and prayed, trying to get people to write (to inmates). It's so easy to do but not easy to get done. I have written to about forty inmates over the years. With thirty-three of them not much happened and they did not write for long. The other seven all are Christians today and five have been released. At eighty and seventy-three years of age we are tired, but what will the next letter hold? Thank you, Jesus.

Mary

*(I'm sure Jesus shares our sorrow over this dilemma that Mary summed up in her letter.)*

## Pray for Ronna

Ronna recently had surgery, and then took a bad fall. She has two more surgeries coming. Please pray for strength and healing.

## CRIME PREVENTION

Many of you do not know my background before the age of forty and before Jesus was in my life. I was not good, but I've been forgiven. This Ministry was formed by us, but it was through Jesus. As part of a team that included Voice of Prophecy, ABN, Breath of Life, and many other programs, together we have seen over a million inmates complete Bible Studies. We believe that this confirms without a doubt that Prison Ministry can be crime prevention.

## OUR BIGGEST DONATION

Many years ago I preached at church, and then we conducted a Prison Ministry program. After we were finished with our presentation, a very little, very old Spanish lady put a cloth in my hand and said, "Please let this help lead someone to Jesus." I put the cloth in my pocket, and took it out later when we got home. It was a handkerchief with eighty-seven cents inside. I can say that I felt this was the biggest donation we had ever received. The next day I preached a million-dollar sermon at Soledad Prison, leading many to Jesus.



## OUR BEST CHRISTMAS IN PRISON

Most of our Christmas holidays were spent at Soledad Prison, where we worked as Chaplains for the longest period of time. One year we received permission for Bikers for Christ to bring their bikes on the yard with Willie Nelson. The turnout was great, and we had a prize for the winner of who had the best Bible Study and Church attendance.

Another year we had different church members from the community come to the prison yards to sing Christmas carols, while the inmates listened from their cells. Another Christmas at Paso Robles Boys School had the best net result. We chose the dorm that housed the hardest kids, and Jesus was there. Sadly, we met many of these youth in later years at real prisons. Six of them made the choice to change and break the direction their life was headed in. They were all released and we still hear from them.

My heart was touched by a Christmas Eve on Death Row in Kentucky. Yvonne got the warden to have family members present. There were also a lot of guards there, and the song service lasted forever. No, folks, we do not do anything that Jesus in His Word does not ask us to do.

## YVONNE'S CHRISTMAS IN PRISON

With God as our guide we have spent many Christmases in prison, and I was allowed the advantage of dealing with both inmates and their families.

One year at Soledad I asked Rudy, one of my inmate helpers in the chapel, what he would give his mother if he could send her a gift. He thought for a while, and then he told me the whole story. His mother took care of his three children, as well as two other children. He told me how his parents didn't have much money and that his mother had never had a coat before, and it was cold out. They had a small farm, so she was outside a lot, and he really wanted her to have a warm coat.

That night I went home and started calling all the community services in the area to see if they might have a coat in her size. Yes, prayer was answered! One of the centers had just received the right sized coat, and said we could have it for Rudy's mother. We called and told her that her son had requested a Christmas gift for her, and asked if we could bring it over to her house sometime on our way to work at the prison. She was very happy to hear from us, and we set up a date and time to go by. When we pulled up in the drive way, before we could get the car stopped, she came running out the front

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## YVONNE'S CHRISTMAS

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door. When we got out of the car she saw that Don was carrying the coat. When we told her it was for her she started crying, saying she had never had a coat before and was always too busy taking care of her grandchildren. She put it on and couldn't believe it was hers. She wanted to know how she could pay us, but I told her it was given to us by a church.

That really made our Christmas that year, and her son walked around with a big smile on his face. Just think what would happen if each of us could put a smile on someone's face this year.



## INMATES MADE CHRISTMAS SPECIAL FOR THREE FAMILIES

When I was Chaplain at Lakeland in Michigan, the Warden called me into his office. He told me that some inmates had raised \$2200 and wanted to give three families nearby a good Christmas. Yvonne called the Welfare Department to find out about families in need. Three families were chosen that all had seven children, so we added a little more money to make it an even \$800 gift per family. We accompanied each family from store to store, watching as they made their choices. They were told they could buy whatever they wished, and with no prompting from us each family spent wisely, buying mostly clothes and food. Some of the guards even pitched in so that all the kids got toys.

Before Christmas we took the adults to the prison to thank the inmates who had made that Christmas special for those families. Do grown men cry? You bet!

## Joy To The World

We have a Christmas gift that we would like to request from all of you this year, and that is for healing prayers to be lifted up on behalf of many that we know who are not well.

We have built many fond relationships with so many of you who have served with us in this Ministry over the years. One of these very special servants is a lady named Mona, who has been working with us for a long time. Many inmates have been blessed by her and her husband, Larry. Yesterday I spoke with Mona – what a spiritual blessing that was! She was concerned because she had not gotten a letter from her three pen friends. Mona is going to call the prisons to see if she can find out what the problem is. Amen!

A lot of you have contacted us, wondering why you haven't heard from your Pen Friends. We have found out that many prisons are no longer providing free stamps to inmates, due to cut-backs, so this may be the problem. If you are not getting mail, do as Mona is doing, call the prison to see if you can find out why your inmate is not writing, or give us a call if you need our help.

By the way, Mona has a heart issue – a big heart it is!

## WRITERS NEEDED

We have a large stack of requests from inmates wanting a Pen Friend. Please write an inmate (or another one if you are already writing), or pass on our information to someone who cares, so they can become a part of this Ministry. Thank you!