

Yokefellow
Prison Ministry

Lehigh Valley
Council

The Yoke and the Cross



**MAY 2013 –
JULY 2013**

The Voice of the Yokefellow Prison Ministry
in the Lehigh Valley

Yokefellow Prison Ministry
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The Yoke and the Cross brings the latest news and events of the Lehigh Valley Council of Yokefellow Prison Ministry to the volunteers, friends, and inmates involved with Yokefellow.

Council Director
Charles L. Goodge

Council Pastoral Advisor
Pastor Gary Morrison

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Lisa M. Perry

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The Director's Chair: Well. It is finally Spring, and I am loving it. It is such a blessed time of the year to just enjoy life and to observe the beauty that our Lord has created. I just love sitting outside and looking at the trees and flowers and to hear the birds singing. Of course the fact that winter is a long ways off doesn't hurt either. I just love this time of year. God is so good.

Not only is the weather blessing us, God is blessing us also. We held an 'Information Night' at Faith Church, on April 8, with several of our volunteers present. I was there along with Nick Lovette, Lisa Perry, Nick Rafferty, Kathleen Moore and Lydia Perkins. We were blessed with three potential new volunteers who expressed interest in Yokefellow, and each are already scheduled to visit one of the facilities as a guest. One is going to the main prison (men's) and one is going to the main prison (women's) and the last to the Juvenile Detention Center. It is such a blessing the way God works in bringing us new volunteers when they are really needed.

On April 20, we held our training session for Yokefellow volunteers. Parole Officer Lisa Cope of the PA Board of Probation and Parole talked about parole procedures and answered questions on virtually every aspect of parole and probation. Following her was Alma Colon, Regional Area Council Director for the Southeast Region, who conducted training for the new volunteers. Northeast Council Director Loretta Oswald and myself lead a training class for those who have been volunteers for some time, just to bring them up to date on the latest regulations. Then Rev. Larry Coleman, Executive Director of Yokefellowship Ministries of Pennsylvania, and he conducted training for the entire group of 25 volunteers present, which was very informative and well appreciated. I was very pleased with the turn out, and I heard a lot of good comments on the training itself. Some time later this year, probably by August or September, we will be holding another session when we can bring in the wardens of the prison and work release facility and the Director of the Juvenile Detention Center.

Please mark your calendar for our annual Appreciation Picnic, held at Lockridge Park on August 18, 2013. It is open to any volunteers, anyone who might be interested in becoming a volunteer and those who have been released from prison. There is always plenty of great food and drinks and a lot of good fun and games. It is also a chance to get to know us better and to ask questions about what we. If you feel the calling to serve the Lord in this ministry, it is a great time to learn more about us, and the ministry. May God richly bless all of you and please keep us in your prayers. We can never get too many prayers.

Charles L. Goodge

UPCOMING EVENTS:

May 16 & July 18 – 7 pm
Executive Board Meeting
Bethany UMC
1208 Brookside Rd
Allentown PA

July 6 – 9 am
Coordinators Meeting
Bethany UMC

August 18 – 2 pm
Appreciation Picnic
Lockridge Park,
543 Franklin St, Alburtis, PA

Annual Banquet
September 28 – 6 pm
Asbury UMC
1533 Springhouse Rd,
Allentown PA

Annual Conference
October 4 & 5, 2013
Lewisburg, PA

We wish to thank those who have donated money in memory of a loved one who has gone home. Through your donations we are able to buy Bibles for inmates at Lehigh County Prison, Work Release and now the Juvenile Detention Center.

Oppression, Toil,
Friendlessness

Again I looked and saw all the oppression that was taking place under the sun:

I saw the tears of the oppressed and they have no comforter; power was on the side of their oppressors and they have no comforter. And I declared that the dead, who had already died, are happier than the living, who are still alive. But better than both is the one who has never been born, who has not seen the evil that is done under the sun. And I saw that all toil and all achievement spring from one person's envy of another. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind. Fools fold their hands and ruin themselves. Better one handful with tranquility than two handfuls with toil and chasing after the wind. Again I saw something meaningless under the sun: There was a man all alone; he had neither son nor brother. There was no end to his toil, yet his eyes were not content with his wealth. "For whom am I toiling," he asked, "and why am I depriving myself of enjoyment?" This too is meaningless a miserable business! Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor:

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Parole Violator Center: The Parole Violator Center Program ("PVC") is playing an integral part in reintegrating an ex-offender with society. The PVC is designed to help individuals released from prison adjust to life in the community while under parole supervision. These centers provide a parolee specific treatment and programs according to their circumstances.

The PVC Program is a secure community corrections center ("CCC"). Parolees are never allowed to leave a center without an official escort and are only allowed off the premises in emergency situations (medical emergencies) that cannot be handled at the center.

What are the benefits of placement at a PVC?

- The parolee resides at a PVC instead of a state correctional institution ("SCI") which keeps them close to community support systems.
- Upon arrival at the PVC the parolee receives immediate programming and if they waive the right to a violation hearing they do not have to go through the Board's violation hearing process.
- As long as the parolee successfully completes everything required they will be released to an approved home plan in a shorter time.

What is the Parole Violator Center Program process:

INTAKE

They receive orientation at the facility and a copy of the rules and expectations. Their photo is taken for identification purposes.

ASSESSMENT

The parolee's needs will be assessed by an interview and testing. A treatment plan is prepared and approved by the joint case review team. This team consists of their parole agent, regional program manager or contract facility coordinator, center director and the parolee.

DAILY ACTIVITIES

The typical day includes eight hours of structured activities (individual counseling sessions, group sessions, NA/AA, interactive journaling, community meetings, role playing sessions, and table top problem solving meetings, etc.) five days per week.

PROGRESS REVIEW

The individual's progress is reviewed with the PVC and Board staff. The individual's release depends on their programming completion and current needs. Upon arrival to the PVC the parole will be assessed to determine their placement in one of the three treatment options of the Community-Based Life Skills Program. The individual is required to participate in the:

Community Based Life Skills (CBLs)- General Treatment

Under this program the individuals will receive Community Based Life Skills (CBLs) based on their need:

- Motivation
- Thinking for a Change
- Anger management
- Employment
- Career development
- Coping with relationships
- Parenting
- Financial responsibility and money management

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If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up. Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

Ecclesiastes 4:1-12 (NIV)

I recently heard on the radio this acronym:

Help –

H – harness the help of others

E – exercise restraint

L – live out your faith – just don't talk it

P – pray, pray, pray

Meeting Specific Needs

Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms. Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

James 5:13-17
(NKJV)

Community Based Life Skills - Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) (Low)

If assessed at this level, the individual will receive the programming needs above and includes:

- Recovery maintenance: Similar to the AOD Parole Violators programming received in a state correctional institution.

Community Based Life Skills - Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) (High)

If assessed at this level, the parolee will receive regular programming and:

- AOD Intensive: Similar to the Parole Violator Therapeutic Community ("TC") programming received in an SCI.

The length of stay at a PVC depends on the individual's needs and completion of the requirements. A typical stay is 60 to 120 days depending on assessed needs and behavior adjustment. Maximum stay is six months with automatic re-parole.

While at the PVC the parolee works with staff regarding issues that caused their violations, participate in the programs most beneficial, work on a home plan and, of course, be on good behavior.

January 2013 Parole Violator Center Program bulletin. To learn more about this program visit the Pennsylvania Probation and Parole Board's website or the Department of Corrections website: www.pbpp.state.pa.us www.cor.state.pa.us

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Volunteer Certification – Why do we need it?

From the Yokefellowship website - -

Yokefellow requires all volunteers working directly with inmates or ex-offenders to be certified. This assures, not only the quality and the safety of the volunteer, but also the effectiveness of the ministry.

Certification is good for two years. Volunteers may receive their certification at annual trainings offered by their Area Council, neighboring Area Councils, or at the YPM annual conference. Schedules of certification/trainings are posted on the website and included in volunteer publications.

Certification is not intended to be a burden, but a bi-annual stepping stone to continued growth and effectiveness in ministry. These events are structured to help volunteers develop ministry knowledge, skills, and awareness. During the training, basic ministry information and topics relevant to all areas of prison ministry, as well as ministry trends, will be presented. Volunteers also have the opportunity to meet and "fellowship" with other volunteers and share their experiences. Though only required bi-annually, volunteers are encouraged to attend as often as possible for continued ministry and spiritual growth.

Prison ministry is a dynamic ministry – always changing. Only the Word of God remains unchanged. Just as we come to a deeper understanding of scripture with each new meditation, we come to a deeper understanding of the ministry God has called us to when we are diligent to attend periodic training events.

Instruct a wise man and he will be wiser still; teach a righteous man and he will add to his learning. *Proverbs 9:9 NIV*

May 2, 2013 – National Day of Prayer – Please continue to pray for our nation.

Are you willing to share the Gospel with those in prison but don't know how to start? Come to the **Timothy Program**, Bethany United Methodist Church, **Tuesdays, from 7:30 – 9:00 pm** and learn how you can serve the Lord by sharing God's love with those in need of hearing how God can change their lives.

If you would like a group to come to your church to speak about Yokefellow Prison Ministry please contact Chuck at 610-820-8469.

What is Truth?

From the book of John chapter 18 verses 37-38 (ESV) we read: "*then Pilate said to him, So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice." Pilate then said unto him, "What is truth?"*"

This is one of the most profound questions asked in the Bible, and it is asked by, of all people, by the very man who was about to have Jesus crucified. Maybe Pilate was being sarcastic, or maybe it was a legitimate question. But even today, many people are still asking the same question, "What is truth?" Is truth always true? Can truth be true today and not true tomorrow? Are past truths, no longer true. Is your truth the same as my truth? What is truth?

There was a time when a well-accepted 'truth' was that the world was flat. This is no longer 'true'. Nor does the sun travel around the earth, or can life begin by 'spontaneous generation'. As time goes by, many things that scientists once thought were true, turn out not to be true. So what is truth?

Truth is the 'Word of God'. It is always true and it will always be true. When you study the Bible and all of the predictions made there, all of which eventually came true, there can be little doubt left that the Bible is true, and represents 'truth'. Just one brief example will prove the point. When the Israelites were still in the wilderness, God told them that they would become a great nation, and under King David and King Solomon, they became one of the greatest nations of all time. But it had also been predicted that they would sin and be dispersed throughout all of the world, and some day, Israel would come back together and become a great nation again. After a series of wars, the Israelites were virtually scattered all over the world, and Israel, no longer existed as a nation. The possibility that they would come back together again was almost beyond conception, and many had come to the conclusion that it would never happen, but it did. It occurred almost 2500 years later, when on May 14, 1948, Israel proclaimed itself as an independent nation, and after a war with the Arab nations, Israel was victorious and re-established as a nation again. Not only that, but they established the same government, traditions, borders, economy which had existed centuries ago. And in spite of the fact that the odds of this ever happening is astronomical, there are literally hundreds of other predictions, that have also come true. So what is truth? God's Word is true, and will always be true.

So what does God's word tells us? God's Word tells us, "You must be born again!" Probably the most important verse in the Bible, and we really have to take it seriously. Eternity is a long time to endure being wrong. If you have not been 'born again', repent today, accept Jesus as your Savior and begin experiencing the truth of God's Word and the assurance of eternity with Jesus Christ, in Heaven. That is the best truth of all.

Yokefellow is looking for a new Executive Director by July 1, 2013.

In May of 2011, Larry Coleman began to shadow Executive Director John Rush and then assumed the Executive Director position on July 1, 2011.

Larry has been involved with coordinating the transitional congregation for Christian Churches United, is the Chair of the Mentoring Committee under which the "Successful Ex-Offender Support Group" has been developed and is Executive Director for Yokefellowship Prison Ministry.

He would like to concentrate on the Successful Ex-Offender Support Groups. To find out more about the Capital Region Ex-Offenders Support Coalition go to <http://www.reentrynow.org> The website has a lot of good material that can be used when assisting inmates on re-entry into society.

Thanks to Executive Director Larry Coleman for all he has done for this organization and pray that God makes the transition for Larry and the new Executive Director go smoothly.

If you are interested in applying for this position you need to send your resume by May 12 so that someone can be in place by June 1. Resumes can be sent to YPM Chairman, David Manos at dfm4@psu.edu or 588 Faunce Rd, Olanta, PA 16863.