

Yokefellow Prison
Ministry

Lehigh Valley
Council

The Yoke and the Cross



**FEBRUARY 2013 –
APRIL 2013**

The Voice of the Yokefellow Prison Ministry
in the Lehigh Valley

Yokefellow Prison Ministry
PO Box 3114 - Wescosville, PA 18106
610-820-8469 - www.yokefellowpa.org

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

Council Chairperson
Lisa M. Perry

Vice Chairman
Rev. Allen Kline

Treasurer
William Truckenmiller

Secretary
Scott Redfield

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Directed Life Committee Meeting
February 23, 9 am
Trinity Baptist Church
689 Hillview Dr, Allentown PA

March 2
Coordinators Meeting
March 21
Executive Board Meeting
Bethany UMC
1208 Brookside Rd
Wescosville PA

Volunteer Training
April 20, 9 am to 3:30 pm
Trinity Baptist Church

August 18, 2 pm to dusk
Appreciation Picnic
Lockridge Park,
525 Franklin St, Alburtis, PA

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

Have you ever heard of the organization . . .

“Believers In Business”

After many months of meeting to pray for each other and for our country, four men decided to form a business group with God in mind and for the purpose of supporting each other by referrals and testimonials. So, on the second week of August, 2012 the first “Believers In Business” meeting took place in this area and it has been growing ever since. With over forty members and visitors in every meeting, B.I.B has continued to bless its members by using the power of God to help their businesses grow and prosper.

The meetings always start with an opening prayer and a closing prayer and a message that all are welcome no matter what their beliefs. Members just need to understand that the group opens and closes in prayer and that we trust in God to lead us in our business and daily lives.

The primary objective of the Believers in Business networking group is to gather a group of men and women of faith who are willing to commit to doing their very best to help their fellow members achieve their business goals and objectives while understanding that God’s power is an essential component in this mission.

Believers In Business meet every second and fourth Tuesday of the month at 7 a.m. at the Parkland Diner on Walbert Avenue, Allentown, PA. All are welcome to attend. The cost of membership is \$10.00 per year.

To find out more information, go to www.bibnetwork.org or call Scott Redfield @ 610-703-0520.

Do not merely listen to the Word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. James 1:22

Psalm 91:1-2

New International Version
(NIV)

Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust."

Jeremiah 29:11

(NIV)

For I know the plans I have for you, "declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

Philippians 4:4-7

(NIV)

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

The Director's Chair: I would first like thank all of you for your thoughts, prayers and support throughout 2012. It has been a good year and it is all because you have been there for us. Thank you and may God bless you all. I would also thank you all for the donations especially given to purchase gifts to be distributed to the children of inmates. When anyone is in jail, their children are in jail also. It is very difficult for them, especially at Christmas time, so thanks to you, we were able to distribute gifts to many of the children of inmates.

It has also been a good year for volunteers, having added several new volunteers to Yokefellow for which we are so grateful. Of course, we could also use more, especially men. There is so much to do. We have volunteers going into the main prison virtually every day, to the Work Release facility and to the Juvenile Detention Center. We also have volunteers who write letters to encourage the inmates and Spiritual Advisors who visit the inmates one-on-one. Anyone who is interested in becoming a volunteer can call or write to us anytime.

On April 20th we will be having a training class conducted by Rev Larry Coleman, Executive Director of Yokefellowship for Pennsylvania, Alma Colon, our Regional Area Director and Lisa J. Cope from the Reading Office of the PA Board of Parole and Probation. It will be a one-day class and any volunteer who hasn't had training in 2 years must attend to remain eligible to go into the prison, and any person who is thinking about volunteering is welcome to attend. We will have coffee, snacks and a light lunch.

We are currently looking at our Directed Life program, in an effort to make it more effective in cutting down on recidivism. Directed Life is an intensive study program, which teaches the inmates life application courses, in an effort help them to adjust to life on the 'outside' once they are released from prison, and to assist them in rebuilding their lives. It is Bible based, and is also coupled with church attendance and Bible studies after their release, and providing mentors. If anyone is interested in this type of ministry, as teacher, mentor or spiritual advisor, please call us.

Last, but certainly not least, I would like to thank Rev Ralph Stevenson for all of his years of dedicated service to the Lord, as our 'spiritual adviser' at Yokefellow, and to welcome our new 'spiritual adviser', Rev Gary Morrison. We are very thankful to both of you, and pray that God will richly bless each of you for you service.

Recently, Lisa and I were privileged to tour the Juvenile Detention Center in Allentown. Kevin Miller, Supervisor of the facility, took us through, and it was very informative, but also very sad that such a facility is necessary. As long as it is here, we will continue to minister to the juveniles. Please pray for them.

Charles L. Goodge



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

.....,but.....

Have you ever noticed how some of our smallest words can have the greatest impact on a sentence? Words like *'if'*, *'and'* and of course *'but'*. *'If'* often shows regret over things not done, as in, I could have been great, *'if'*.... *'And'* shows something additional is needed. And then there is the word *'but'*. *'But'* is probably the most powerful, because it changes the entire direction of the sentence. All too often *'but'* is followed by news that you do not want to hear, for example; "Your blood-work was fine, but....". You have great credentials and we'd love to hire you, but... I love you, but... As soon as the word *'but'* is injected into the sentence, we are waiting for the bad news. It is a word that can stop us in our tracks.

It is also a word that can stop God in His tracks. I have talked to so many people who have said, "I just don't know what God has planned for me. I don't know what direction I should go in." It is a genuine concern for many of us. How do we know what God has planned for us? I personally, have never heard a *'booming voice'* calling me. He has never spoken to me from a burning bush, so how do I know what he wants. I think it all begins with each of us.

Many times I thought I was yielding to God and asking for His direction with all sincerity, but in fact I wasn't. As I surveyed the situation, what I was really saying to God was, "Lord, I love you and I will do anything that you want me to do; I will go anywhere you want me to go; I will say whatever you want me to say,but..... I always had a *'but'* in there. I finally realized that God's reply to that was, "I can't use you. Until you get the *'buts'* out, I can't use you." God has never called anyone to go part way with Him. He wants us to get out of the boat and walk with Him, right across those choppy waves.

I used to fear if I took the *'buts'* out, God would send me to some remote part of the world and I'd be in a grass hut eating bugs off the floor, and watching for snakes. I finally realized that wherever God chose to send me, not only would He go with me but He will provide me with all I needed to do His will. He isn't going to send me somewhere to fail. I know of nowhere in the Bible where God call anyone to a task, and if they did exactly what He said, they failed to accomplish what He wanted them to accomplish. It's kind of like the line from the old TV series, "The *'A'* Team", which said, "I just love it when a plan comes together." When God gives the plan, it comes together, and it isn't going to fail, ever.

Do want to serve the Lord? Have you given your heart to Him? Are you willing to go where He calls you? Do you trust Him enough to *'get out of the boat'*? Then get out of the boat. As much as we like to criticize Peter, he was the only one to get *'out of the boat'*, and if you want to walk on water, you have to get out of the boat. Peter did and so can you. Get rid of the *'ifs'*, *'ands'* and *'buts'*, and just do it. God will bless you in ways you would never believe possible, both here and in Heaven. Nothing could be better to hear those beloved words, "Well done thy good and faithful servant."

The "Inmate Accountability Bank" is a new program that was launched by the Office of Victim Advocate.

According to a recent article in the *Correctional Newsfront* newsletter of the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections there is a new program called the Inmate Accountability Bank.

Often victims of crime wonder whether or not their offender has take responsibility for his/her actions and is remorseful. Sometimes inmates seek to share their responsibility and acknowledge the pain caused by their action with their victims. The offenders wish to write a letter of apology or accountability to the victim.

Through the Inmate Accountability Bank these letters can be written without violating DOC policy that prohibits such contact. "Under the Inmate Accountability Bank Program, registered crime victims are contacted when such a letter is received," DOC Director of Victim Services Andrew Barnes said. "The victim then determines if or when they want to view the letter. They also inform us if they want the inmate to be informed that they received and read the letter."

Any inmate can submit an apology letter which will then be stored in the "bank". A staff member of the Office of Victim Advocate reviews the letter for appropriateness before forwarding to the victim who has indicated their willingness to receive such letters. "If we receive a letter from an inmate whose victim has indicated they do not want to read such letters, we simply hold the letter," Barnes said. "It is possible that, over time, a crime victim may change their mind. If that happens, we would make the letter available to them.

Participation in the Accountability Bank Program is voluntary and does not positively affect an offender's release date or conditions of incarceration.

To learn more about the Inmate Accountability Bank, contact the Office of Victim Advocate toll-free at 800-322-4472 or visit their website at www.ova.state.pa.us.

The Lehigh Valley is blessed to have Trio Provisions, a Christian butcher shop whose foundation and success are based on Jesus Christ. Some of us may already shop at Trio and have never been disappointed with the quality, price, service, or the meals we have prepared using their ingredients.

Once you have tried them we are sure you will return again and again. Please save your receipts and send them to Yokefellow Prison Ministry, PO Box 3114, Wescosville, PA 18106. Graciously, Trio will donate 10% on your purchases (some restrictions) to Yokefellow.

Here is Trio's information:
1800 Willow Spur
East Texas PA 18046
610-530-1431
www.trioprovvisions.com

Thank you, Dan the Meat Man and His Team, for your willingness to help Yokefellow Prison Ministry.

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.

We wish to thank the churches and individuals for showing others the reasons for the season and donating money for Bibles for inmates and gifts for their children. To date we have been able to send 66 Bibles to inmates and were able to provide gifts for over 25 children.

Note: In the interest of good Christian stewardship if you no longer wish to receive this Newsletter, please notify us so we can cancel your subscription. If you would like the Newsletter emailed to you instead please call us with your email address 610-820-8469 or send us an email yokefellowpa@yahoo.com. Thanks.