



**AUGUST –
OCTOBER 2012**

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
Rev. Ralph Stevenson

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Do You Want to Go to Heaven?

I heard a story of an Irish Priest who went into a pub to minister to some of the patrons. He asked the first man if he wanted to go to Heaven, and he said, "Yes!" He asked a second man and he also replied, "Yes!" When he asked the third man if he wanted to go to Heaven the man said firmly, "No!" The priest was startled. "You don't want to go to Heaven?" he asked. "No," the man replied. The priest couldn't believe what he was hearing so he tried one more time. "Are you telling me that you do not want to go to Heaven when you die?" he asked. "Oh yes," the man replied, "when I **die**. I thought you meant right now."

Aren't we all a little bit like that; we all want to go to Heaven, but not now? I suppose it really depends on our reasoning as to why we wish to go, or to stay, that really matters. Paul talked about it in Philippians 1:21-26. He expressed how he longed to depart and be with Jesus, but it was more advantageous for the brethren that he remain here to minister to them. That is a man of conviction and character. He was caused to suffer tremendously with the beatings, imprisonments and stoning, and yet he preferred to stay here and further the gospel of Jesus Christ. What a turnaround in his life; from persecuting the church to being willing to remain and suffer for the church, and for Jesus Christ.

I suppose in a small way, I can relate to Paul, even though I have never suffered like he did, because I often think of what I owe God for all that He has done for me, and I want to remain here longer to demonstrate how much I love Him for it. I think of my wife and children and grandchildren and realize what a hardship it would be on them if I weren't here for them when they need me.

I think all of us are longing to go to Heaven, but our main desire should be to serve the Lord God for as long as He allows us to serve. God has given us the greatest gift possible, His Son, Jesus Christ, and even though we can never repay Him for it, we can serve Him to the best of our ability to show Him that we are thankful. We need to use the gifts that He has given us to serve Him, we need to use the time He has given us to serve Him, and we need to humble ourselves to serve Him, for as long as He allows us. He created us to serve Him, but He also gave us the ability to refuse to serve Him. What will you choose?

In Matthew Chapter 25, Jesus talks about the parable of the talents, and how each was expected to use the talents given to them, to serve the master. When I was young, I just wanted to get to Heaven, even if I had to sneak in the back door. Now I not only want to go through the front door, I also want to come bearing gifts to place at the Master's feet, and I really hope to hear Him say, "Well done, my 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." What a glorious day that will be!



APPRECIATION PICNIC

AUGUST 26, 2012 –
2:00 p.m. until dusk
LOCKRIDGE PARK
525 FRANKLIN ST.
ALBURTIS, PA

Please see attached flyer. Call to let us know how many are coming, if you need directions or a ride.

If you are interested in becoming a Yokefellow volunteer, come and meet other volunteers and ex-offenders who Yokefellow has served.

**Yokefellow Prison
Ministry
Statement of Faith**

We believe in one God, eternal creator and sustainer of Heaven and earth; existing in three persons: The Father, Son and Holy Spirit, co-equal and co-eternal.

We believe in the inspiration and the authority of Scripture.

We believe in the deity of Jesus Christ.

We believe in the virgin birth of Christ.

We believe in the atoning death of Christ.

We believe in the physical resurrection of Christ.

We believe in the personal return of Christ.

We believe in the reality of sin.

We believe in the salvation by faith through spiritual regeneration.

We believe in the power of prayer

We believe in the duty of evangelism.

Do you have anything you would like to contribute to the next Newsletter?

Please email it to yokefellowpa@yahoo.com.

The Director's Chair:

I would like to take this time to invite all of our volunteers, former volunteers and supporters to the Appreciation Picnic on August 26, at Lockridge Park in Alburtis, and also to invite anyone who is interested in becoming a volunteer. Without the volunteers and those who have supported this ministry, it just could not exist. This is our only time to personally say 'thank you' to each of you, and in many cases, our only chance to sit and visit with you. As a result of our recent training classes, we have gotten a few more volunteers, and we are also hopeful that some of our former inmates will be able to attend. Please plan on coming if you can, and let us know how many will be coming with you, so we can have enough food and refreshments for everyone. If you cannot attend, please accept our sincere thank you for all you do for the ministry. It is greatly appreciated and I am sure God is blessing you for your efforts.

For anyone who feels that God may be calling them into prison ministry, this is a good opportunity to come out and ask questions, and tell us of your concerns. We currently have teams of volunteers going into the main prison for the men and for the women, going into the juvenile facility, and also the work release facility. Each one of these areas is in need of more volunteers, and in several ways. Some of our volunteers go into the facility and conduct Bible discussion groups. Some of them simply write letters of encouragement. Some serve as mentors when the inmates are released, and some of the older volunteers go in as 'spiritual advisors'. A 'spiritual advisor' goes into the prison and will meet with various inmates, sitting at a table, one-on-one, and talk with them, pray with them and mentor them.

We also have a 'Directed Life' program which is designed to assist the inmate once they are released back into society. Most people don't realize how very difficult it is to get started back in the community, once you have spent some time in prison. The truth is, without a strong support system, it is almost impossible to begin a new life on the outside. So as you see, there is a lot of opportunity to serve the Lord in the prison system, and we are anxious to answer any of the questions you might have.

The main distinction with our volunteers is that they have a passionate desire to serve the Lord in whatever way He calls them, and they truly believe that this is where God has called them to serve. Where is God calling you to serve? The truth is, He calls us all to serve somewhere. Maybe prison ministry is your calling. Pray about it and follow the Lord's commands. He will richly bless you for it.

Charles L. Goodge



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.

Is There Anyone Up There?

I once heard a story about a man who was visiting the west coast of California and he ventured down to the cliffs that ran along the shore. As he gazed at the Pacific Ocean and the majesty of it all, he got too close to the edge, and suddenly the ground beneath his feet gave way and he began to drop off the cliff. All of a sudden he saw a bush that he was able to grab a hold of to prevent his fall. While hanging there, he looked up and cried, "Help! Help! Is there anyone up there?" A voice came back, "This is God. I am up here. I can help you, but you must trust me." The man called back and said, "Oh I do trust you Lord." Then God replied, "Very well. Let go of the bush." The man looked up into Heaven, then down at the rocks some 200 feet below, with the waves crashing against them and spraying high into the air, and then he looked back up to heaven and said, "Is there anyone else up there?"

It is a humorous story, but it does have a serious point. It reminds me of the men and women in the prison systems, who are hanging onto life and saying, "Is there anyone up there?" They find themselves in prison, because of bad choices. They really want to get out of the system, and just don't know how. Inwardly they are crying, "Is there anyone up there?"

When we go in there we sing, pray and discuss the Bible. When we sing, the song that the inmates request most, is a song by J.J. Heller entitled "What Love Really Means". The chorus goes,

"Who will love me for me?
Not for what I have done or what I will become
Who will love me for me?
'Cause nobody has shown me what love
What love really means."

That says a lot about the men and women in prison. They are crying out, is there anyone up there? Are you up there? Will you love me for me? Will you show the love of Christ to them? Is God calling you into prison ministry? If He is, you probably don't want to go, I know I didn't. But I am glad I answered His call. We at Yokefellow are always looking for more volunteers, who God has called to teach in the prisons, to minister to the men and women when they get out, to write letters to them, and to mentor them.

We ask that you would consider this ministry and ask God if this is what He is calling you to do. He will surely let you know, and I know that He will use you in a marvelous way. God doesn't call the "equipped," He "equips" the called. All you have to do is take that first step, and He will lead you. He will be with you every step of the way, and then when someone in prison asks, "Is there anyone up there?" You can answer "Yes! God is up there and He loves you and me with an everlasting love. Then, because of His great love He commands us to love one another.

Isn't sharing Christ with others a big part of, "What love really means?"

"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." **Jeremiah 29:11**

Still Doin' Time

Country Western singer, George Jones, sang a song about a man spending most of his time in a bar, drinking and feeling sad over a lost love. It was called "Still Doin' Time (in a Honkey-Tonk Prison)", and it brought to mind all the people who are 'doin time' in a real prison. So many are there multiple times, which begs to ask the question, why? Why do you keep coming back here? Why are you 'still doin' time'? I sometimes, kiddingly ask them, "Did you miss the food?" Of course they laugh and say, "No." So again, why?

I have thought about it a lot, and talked to hundreds of inmates, and I have tried to figure it out. I had concluded that most are here because they have made 'poor decisions', but maybe that is too simplistic. We all have made poor decisions. If poor decisions were the criteria, we'd all be in prison. Many, but not all, have lived in poor neighborhoods, grew up without two parents, or were abused as a child. There didn't seem to be any one thing to put my finger on as the main reason for all these people, constantly 'doin' time'.

Then it came to me. Finally, I feel that I have gotten a hint as to the problem. Practically all of them have grown up with the mind-set that they don't want to, and they don't have to, follow the basic simple rules, which confront all of us. They don't follow the rules at home, they don't follow the rules at school and they don't follow the rules in society. If they don't agree with the rule, they don't follow it. Now I know that none of us like rules, but we are a nation of rules. We need rules to maintain our freedoms. Freedom comes with the adherence of the rules, and without rules, we have chaos. So where does it begin? It begins in the home.

We have to teach our children at a very early age to respect the rules, because there will always be rules. You don't have to agree with the rule, but you do have to follow it. I have made a list of the three rules which I believe cover most cases:

1. Love your children with all you have.
2. Teach them that there are consequences for violating the rules.
3. **Never** reward 'bad behavior.

Today we have 350,000 of our children coming out school every year, and going straight to prison, with almost all of them coming back within 6 months of being released. This is unsatisfactory. Many will spend years, if not a lifetime, in prison. They wind up doing 'life', on the installment plan. Three years here, two years there, five more over there. We have more people in prison in the United States than any other country in the world. There are more people in our prisons today, for non-violent drug-related charges than were in the entire prison system 30 years ago. Proverbs 13:24 says, "Spare the rod and spoil the child." This simply means, there has to be consequences for bad behavior. Love your child enough to correct them. Love your child enough to show them there are consequences. Love them enough to show them that they must respect, and follow the rules. Love them enough so that you will never get that letter from them saying that, "I miss you all and wish I could be with you now, but I'm still doin' time.

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

FUNDRAISING BANQUET:

SATURDAY,
SEPTEMBER 29, 2012
ASBURY UNITED
METHODIST CHURCH
1533 SPRINGHOUSE ROAD
ALLENTOWN PA 18104

Please complete the flyer attached and return so we can save you and your friends seats.

Will be presenting former Council Director Wayne Benjamin with a plaque for his many years of leadership and faithful service.

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.trioprovisions.com

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