

GLAD TIDINGS

A MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT'

by Rev. David Morton

Yokefellow Prison Ministry is a movement well over 40 years old. I've been an advocate for this wonderful ministry for over 35 years. We have a rich history of leadership. Most recently, Rev. David Canady closed his tenure as President of our Yokefellow Board. We wish him well and are appreciative of his leadership and care of Yokefellow. He has been faithful. Our people, the inmates and staff housed and working in facilities across the state depend on us. I challenge you to be faithful to Christ and dependable Yokefellows for our inmates. Please hold to the concepts of Yokefellow. We are listeners first and slow responders. We pray that the Holy Spirit will speak to us all and we must be good listeners, faithful to God's call. Our newsletter is under construction. In other words, our newsletter will have a different look! We will continue to give you up-to-date and accurate news of what is going on in Yokefellow around the state. It's our desire to highlight your ministry and build our community, anticipating that we will grow into a more solid and viable community. It is our plan to use more electronic media to cut costs and provide messages and news more quickly. Development of

electronic training for volunteers is happening now and will be utilized in the near future. Using these means of media will enhance our organization. And, the board desires to be your voice as we meet with Prison Administration to build a lasting and strong relationship for growth, visibility, and relevance. It's my hope that the NC Department of Public Safety will insist on having a Yokefellow ministry in every institution and field unit. We will develop strategies to recruit and train more volunteers, create more training opportunities and sustain our dialogue with prison officials around the state. Embrace with me those challenges for the future of Yokefellow Prison Ministry of NC. I challenge you to speak at your local churches about the Yokefellow movement. Encourage your members to donate to the Yokefellow ministry. Encourage them to become Yokefellow participants. Challenge them to read their Bible and respond to Jesus' call to minister to those in prison. Be faithful as God has been faithful to you. I extend my best to you in this New Year. Let us be our best for the Lord!

WELCOME TO OUR NEW FORMAT...

In order to foster effective communication, the Executive Committee of the Board and the Office of the Executive Director will produce quarterly newsletters 4 times a year – winter, spring, summer, and fall editions. For this first edition, we are sending copies to each Yokefellow Coordinator to distribute to the volunteers. The newsletter will also be emailed to those volunteers and coordinators who have provided an email address to the office. Upon request, copies of the newsletter can be mailed to individuals. Please call the office if this is your preference. We are trying to facilitate communication through electronic means as much as possible, because this allows us to save money on printing and postage costs!

YOKEFELLOW MODEL ENTERS LOCAL JAIL!

by Rev. Bruce Pate

The image of Yokefellow during these 46 years in North Carolina has been that of a group of volunteers in one of our state's prisons. But now the Yokefellow model as ministry has been taken into a county jail. Here's the story. In 2012, the Haywood Correctional Institution, a minimum custody prison in Waynesville, NC closed, leaving around 10-15 volunteers without a prison setting in which to continue to serve. Late in 2014, Shirley Downey, who had been a Yokefellow volunteer at Haywood, came to me with a question. I had been the unit coordinator at Haywood, as well as a member of the Yokefellow board of directors. She asked: "What about offering Yokefellow to the residents of our local jail?" I replied that as far as I knew, it had not been tried, but I could see no reason not to try. I ran the idea by Rev. Melvin Solomon (the president of the board at that time) and he concurred. So in late 2014, Shirley, along with two other enlisted ladies, began a weekly Yokefellow session for those in the women's "pod" of the Haywood County Detention Center (jail). These many months later, the venture is still taking the Yokefellow approach to the women there who wish to participate. I have since approached Haywood County Sheriff, Greg Christopher, with the idea of a similar session being offered in the men's pod. Hopefully in time that can happen. For now, Yokefellow will only be offered for the women at Haywood. We are grateful to the vision of a former volunteer in whom the Yokefellow spirit refused to die! Thank you Shirley Downey!

A special thank you to...

The Bob Barker Foundation (located in Fuquay Varina) for their generous financial support during 2015. They gave two grants to Yokefellow, totaling \$25,000.00. We are grateful for our strong partnership with Bob Barker and for their continued support and encouragement!

And to the YF volunteers, board members, area churches, denominational bodies, and individual donors who contributed financially to Yokefellow in 2015. Most importantly, we are grateful for your time, energy, compassion, and ministry to the residents of our state's correctional facilities. We value your help, support, and prayers tremendously!

And finally, a word of gratitude to the Executive Committee of 2015 – thank you for your dedication, time, and wisdom! We look forward to the year ahead with our 2016 Executive Committee:

President – David Morton; Vice President – Leon Morrow; Secretary – Priscilla Durkin

Treasurer – Gary Cagle; At-large Member – Chris Mitchell

We also have 3 new board members this year! They are Cherie Ashe, Rob Ferry, and Carlton Gooding. We look forward to our work together!

**** A list of 2015 contributors can be found on the website – www.yokefellowprisonministry.org. A hard copy can be mailed upon request to the office. ****

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