

Glad Tidings

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF YOKEFELLOW PRISON MINISTRY



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Yokefellow Prison Ministry will participate in #GivingTuesdayNow on May 5, 2020.

PRISONS CLOSED; YOKEFELLOW IS NOT

Pray for inmates and prison staff across the State as they face COVID-19 infections and months of isolation from visitors and volunteers.

Pray for those being released into a COVID-infected society. Returning citizens face even more challenges as they seek places to live and work.

Pray for God's direction for how to continue Yokefellow's mission in the midst of unprecedented challenges.

So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him. ~ Acts 12:5

Supporting Volunteers During COVID



As volunteers face an unprecedented season of isolation at home, State Developer Carlton Gooding is reaching out to offer pastoral care and provide ways to stay connected. He is in the process of calling **every** volunteer to provide support and ask how Yokefellow can help.

One way to stay connected is to complete refresher training

from home. Online volunteer training is available on the website at yokefellowprisonministry.org/forms. Scroll down to **For Prison Ministry Volunteers** and click on **How to Access Online Volunteer Training**.

You can also stay connected through Social Media. Follow Yokefellow Prison Ministry on Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter, and also visit the ministry's website.

#GivingTuesdayNow is May 5

Some of you have supported Yokefellow through #GivingTuesday, which takes place the 1st Tuesday after Thanksgiving. The same movement has declared May 5 #GivingTuesdayNow. This is a Global Day of Unity, when people all over the world are encouraged to support their favorite charities.



These unprecedented times have hurt Yokefellow financially, and we need your help! Yokefellow plans to continue expanding the reach of its ministry when prisons reopen to volunteers, but we need funding to do this. Our mission remains steadfast: bringing the love of Christ to inmates and returning citizens through building trusting relationships.

Yokefellow Prison Ministry of N.C., Inc.



IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THOSE WE SERVE

As a Yokefellow Volunteer, you have responded to the call of our Lord to serve in a unique capacity in reaching, reconciling, and restoring lives impacted by crime and incarceration. Because of the Coronavirus pandemic, with unprecedented challenges within the correctional setting and the effect on the inmate population, we collectively and continuously ache within our souls. Each day, we cannot help but to reflect on Matthew 11:28-30 and the inspiration these words bring to us to fellowship and encourage the people we are called to serve.



However, on March 16th, in order to reduce the risk of this disease getting into prisons and spreading, the NC Division of Prisons temporarily suspended visitation and volunteer programs throughout the state. Unfortunately, these prisons and detention centers can be dangerous places during a pandemic. Many of these institutions house people with serious health problems as well as an increasingly older population of people with a high risk for serious complications. Each of these institutions is like a small city, so social distancing and self-quarantine can be challenging.

During these unparalleled times, inmates depend on their faith more than any other time. For many inmates, especially those that attend Yokefellow Meetings, this weekly event has become their safe haven, their place of refuge with people they trust. This time of fellowship and interaction has become their salvation, their lifeline,

their breath of life and bridge to Heaven. But for now, Yokefellow has been suspended for entry. Currently, NC facilities are gearing up with heightened precautions to address COVID-19, and staff are working under high stress, anxiety, and long hours, trying to manage and maintain the safety and security of the institution. Even during normal times of operation, within a correctional setting, prison life is not "normal." Imagine the fear, sadness, despair, and unmatched conditions that many inmates may experience, and think about the stress, agitation, and depression the inmate's families may experience as they receive little communication from their loved one.

As ministers of reconciliation, we are called to adapt, be flexible, and be patient. These are difficult times for our ministries at the local prisons. The inability to physically visit and sit across a table to actively listen and connect with an inmate is



a hard pill to swallow. We treasure that moment and seek the opportunity again! Thank you for taking advantage of the many opportunities to go before the "Throne of Grace" boldly on behalf of the individuals you minister to each week. You may not remember every name, but our Lord remembers!

The infectious nature of COVID-19 has changed everyone's lifestyle. But let us remember: You cannot sustain caring for others if you disregard caring for yourselves. Self-care leads to the best care!

Carlton Gooding, State Developer
Yokefellow Prison Ministry of NC

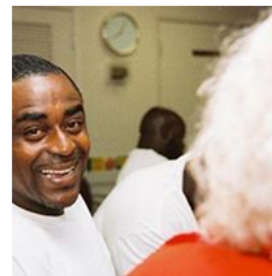
Impact of COVID-19 on Ministry's Financial Stability

I am sure that you believe the same thing I do. Prison inmates need God's love, and Yokefellow Prison Ministry brings that love to them. But this year we have not brought in enough funds to keep our program running, and we need your help.



The ministry has two paid employees that are essential in keeping this ministry alive. Vita handles the administration, and Carlton is out in the field recruiting and going to prisons. They enable this ministry to succeed in many ways that are invisible to our prison inmates, volunteers, and donors. God has blessed us with these very dedicated people who have a heart for prison inmates. But so far this year, we are running a deficit. Even using our reserves in checking with the donations we have brought in, we can continue to operate for only 3.9 months. Very simply, we are running out of money.

Yokefellow Prison Ministry is in uncharted waters this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We know that we are just one of many non-



profits whose fundraising and donations have been hit hard. Churches are not meeting. Businesses are closed, and many are out of work. Giving is down across the nation. Those who can still give to the needy they see, but you care for those who are behind bars. You care for the prisoners, for those suffering from addictions, for those segregated from society. Your heart is open in a special way, and your help is more important now than ever.

At this time, we are not allowed to enter the prisons to build or continue relationships with the inmates. But we are looking to the future to be ready when we can return to minister. God has given us talented people to keep this organization going, but we need your help by way of donations.

This is your chance to give from your heart. This is your chance to help Yokefellow bring God's love to inmates on the inside and to those recently released from prison. Your donations will keep the doors open to people who need to hear about God's love. Please give today.

Yvette Morrow, Chair
Finance & Budget Committee
Yokefellow Prison Ministry of NC

MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT

Yokefellow Brothers and Sisters.

I really like these verses as I think about Yokefellow Prison Ministry.

Prov. 19:21: *Many are the plans of a man's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails.*

Phil. 2:1-2: *If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from His love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose.*

The Yokefellow movement is made of people who do everything to please God. People who participate enjoy a special quality of fellowship, and Yokefellow is a grace-driven organization that demands community and faith. The people of our world hunger for God's grace.

These words I wrote a year ago are still true today but take new meaning and understanding in this time of COVID-19. I'm writing you today in light of a virus that stymies our volunteer outreach and spirit. I've heard many interpretations describing what we're experiencing today. Here are some of my thoughts about the subject.

The nonprofit sector is in crisis, according to many nonprofit organizations and industry leaders. Be-

cause of COVID-19, nonprofits are seeing revenues vanish, training events postponed or canceled, and volunteers disappear as a result of social distancing efforts to prevent the spread of the new coronavirus.

Organizations are calling out to donors, corporations, grantor foundations, and other grant providers to boost financial support and ensure organizational vitality. This is a time of turbulence and uncertainty for many nonprofits. We feel the emotional and spiritual stress of not being able to fulfill our mission of serving those in prison or after-care. Even churches are collecting less in tithes and contributions.

The leadership of Yokefellow Prison Ministry is prayerful and diligent in providing continued volunteer services to the incarcerated in NC. We seek God's face so that the Lord's purpose will prevail. We are encouraged from being united in Christ, we fellowship with the Spirit of Christ, and our joy is complete in our like-mindedness, love, and being one in spirit and purpose. We must look ahead, striving to make our organization stronger when the prison gates open again to welcome Yokefellow volunteers back inside.

How do we make our organization stronger? We follow and adhere to our disciplines:

Prayer: Pray every day, preferably at the beginning of the day.

Scripture: Seek God's guidance through reverent reading of the Bible every day.

Worship: Participate, at least once a week, in public worship of God.

Money: Return to God a definite portion of my income to support the Christian cause.

Service: Invest a specific amount of my time in humble acts of love and service to others.



Witness: Make an unapologetic witness in daily life, work, & words.

Study: Become a better-informed Christian by careful study of Christian books.

We also look to our Biblical foundation of commitment, which is an invitation from Christ the Lord in Matt. 11:29-30:

Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly of heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

The words I wrote last year are true today. In these unprecedented times, we are called to think "outside the box" and fulfill the mission and movement of Yokefellow Prison Ministry. One day, the prison doors will open again, and we will yoke ourselves and give rest to others.

Will you join with me in prayer to ask the Lord how we can please him during these times? Will you read the scriptures for God's guidance? Will you pledge to worship and stay connected with your fellowship of faith? We pray that you will give a portion of your income to support us in the Christian cause. I think the Lord is asking us to listen to Him and provide new means of service and care for others. God is asking us to witness about His Good News

today. And the Lord is asking us to prepare ourselves through study and prayer. These are wonderful disciplines, not only for Yokefellow volunteers, but for all believers.

It's easy to say that we have a lot to do in this unprecedented time. We've never been stretched like this before. Every aspect of the church is being stretched to minister to others. Our fellowship will not be broken. Will you join us as the Lord makes our joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose? I know the Lord will guide us because that is His promise, even in these unprecedented times. And God is faithful.

I pray that you and your families are well and safe. You are not alone. God is with us. And as disciplined Yokefellows, you are aware people are praying for you. To God Be the Glory. Amen.

David Morton, President
Yokefellow Prison Ministry of NC



Continuing the Mission amid COVID-19

Like the rest of the world, Yokefellow Prison Ministry is facing unprecedented challenges. Prisons are closed to volunteers, aftercare meetings have moved online, and

live volunteer trainings currently violate the law. Despite these obstacles, our mission has not changed: to build trusting relationships with inmates and returning citizens through listening, caring, and encouraging.

Added to these challenges is the financial impact on our donor base. Some of our donors have lost their jobs while others have seen their savings dwindle as the economy has been shut down. Prisons will again open their doors, and those we serve will be eagerly looking to resume meeting with Yokefellow volunteers, but will Yokefellow Prison Ministry still exist to serve them? The answer is up to you.



Only a small segment of the population cares about people in the prison system. You are one of the few whose hearts God has moved to care for "the least of these" (Matt. 25:39-40). Only those who care about this population are going to support Yokefellow Prison Ministry. If not you, then who?

Yokefellow Prison Ministry's mission has not changed. Will you continue partnering with us through your prayers, volunteering, and financial giving?

Vita Alligood, Executive Director
Yokefellow Prison Ministry of NC



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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED