



Building Trusting Relationships
Listening • Caring • Encouraging

Local Coordinator Manual

June 2020

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Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to serve as a Local Coordinator for Yokefellow Prison Ministry of N.C., Inc. (Yokefellow)! Your role as a Local Coordinator is vitally important to this ministry. Other than the Executive Director and State Developer, everyone affiliated with Yokefellow serves as a volunteer. With over 400 volunteers ministering to inmates across the state of North Carolina, local coordinators are needed to organize the local groups serving each prison. Without your help, Yokefellow would be unable to function well. Please know that your service is very much needed and appreciate. Thank you for all you do!

Overview of Yokefellow

Yokefellow is an interdenominational, racially-diverse Christian ministry of reconciliation begun in 1969 (and incorporated in NC in 1972), which includes both lay and clergy, male and female. It is founded on the idea that people's lives are changed through committed relationships.

The ministry is conducted by trained volunteers who lead weekly meetings of small groups inside North Carolina's correctional institutions. Yokefellow is not focused on worship, preaching, teaching, counseling, or Bible study, but is a ministry of listening, sharing, caring, encouragement and support provided by community volunteers from the "outside" yoked in fellowship with those on the "inside" through weekly small group meetings.

The Biblical foundation of Yokefellow's commitment is the invitation by Christ our Lord in the Gospel of Matthew 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."*

Yokefellow's objectives are to...

- Provide an open and inviting setting for inmates to examine their lives, talk about their faith, and search for direction and purpose with others who are committed to do the same.
- Offer opportunities for inmates to build relationships with Yokefellow volunteers in the weekly group meetings, thereby lessening their separation from the "outside world" and helping them prepare for a transition back into productive contribution in society.

History of Yokefellow

Yokefellow Prison Ministry of North Carolina, Inc. is an outgrowth of the Yokefellow movement, begun in the 1950's by the Quaker theologian and leader, Elton Trueblood. On his way to a speaking engagement in Cleveland, Ohio in 1946, Dr. Trueblood read Matthew 11:28-30:

“Come unto me all ye who labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest for your souls, for my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

This gave him an inspiration centering on the image and function of the yoke. Just as oxen yoked together can accomplish more than a single animal, why can't Christians “yoked together” give added strength to the cause of Christ? This birthed the Yokefellow model for ministry: Christians yoked together for fellowship, encouragement, and mutual support.

In 1964, three pastors from North Carolina went to Pennsylvania for a Yokefellow retreat. They were so impressed that they brought the Yokefellow model and dream back to North Carolina. For the next few years, Yokefellow was shared primarily in local church and retreat settings. In 1969, the first effort to carry Yokefellow into a prison in North Carolina took place, and Yokefellow Prison Ministry of North Carolina was born. The ministry was later incorporated as a NC nonprofit in 1972.

Since 1969, Yokefellow Prison Ministry has lived out its mission statement:

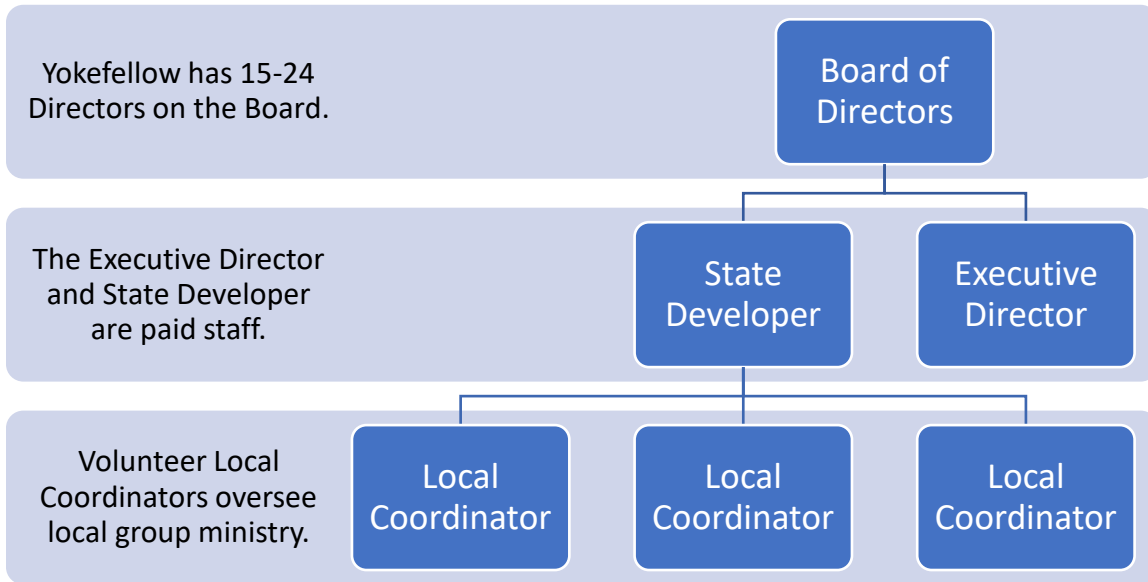
“to enable prisoners, yoked in personal relationship with community volunteers, to examine their lives; experience the forgiveness, healing, and power of God's love; and return to family and community with a covenant commitment to personal responsibility and contribution.”

Today, over 400 volunteers from a variety of churches across the state of North Carolina conduct weekly Yokefellow meetings for inmates in 2/3 of the state's prisons. Our volunteers are male and female, clergy and laity, from different racial, ethnic, and denominational backgrounds. Some have served for over 30 years! Thousands of inmates have found acceptance, a listening ear, an encouraging voice, and the reality of Christ's love.

Seven Yokefellow Disciplines

Yokefellow volunteers commit to engage in the Seven Yokefellow Disciplines regularly, which are commonly-accepted disciplines for Christian living: (1) Prayer; (2) Scripture (reading the Bible); (3) Worship (participate in public worship weekly); (4) Money (return to God a portion of your income to support the Christian cause); (5) Service (serve others in love); (6) Witness (share your faith); and (7) Study (study Christian books).

Yokefellow Structure



Board of Directors

Yokefellow's bylaws require 15-24 Directors to serve on the Board. This is a volunteer position. The Board oversees the Executive Director & State Developer and ensures the ministry fulfills Yokefellow's vision and mission.

Staff Positions

The **Executive Director** is a paid position overseeing the day-to-day operations of the ministry. The Executive Director is responsible for fundraising, finances, and administrative duties.

The **State Developer** is a paid position overseeing the Local Coordinators and developing relationships with prison personnel across the state. The State Developer is the primary point of contact for Local Coordinators.

Volunteers

Yokefellow volunteers visit inmates at a local prison on a weekly basis. Volunteer Local Coordinators take care of the administrative duties to ensure the local group ministry runs efficiently and effectively. Volunteers are Christians and must complete Yokefellow and local prison training before they can participate in the Yokefellow ministry.

Volunteer Application and Requirements

Not everyone is well-suited for prison ministry or for ministry through Yokefellow. For this reason, potential volunteers are required to complete a Volunteer Application Packet (see Appendix A). In addition to completing and submitting a signed Volunteer Application Form, applicants must have their pastor submit a letter of good standing and two non-family members submit letters of recommendations directly to the State Developer.

After the Volunteer Application Packet has been fully completed and submitted, the State Developer will contact the applicant about completing Yokefellow training as well as training for the local prison. The State Developer will also put the applicant in contact with the Local Coordinator for the local group serving the desired prison.

Before volunteering with a local Yokefellow group, volunteers must meet the following requirements:

- Be a Christian who has been active in a local church for at least six months.
- Complete Yokefellow training and receive a Yokefellow volunteer card.
- Complete training for the local prison and receive a volunteer card from the Prison System of North Carolina or the federal prison.

To continue volunteering with a local Yokefellow group, volunteers must do the following:

Grow as a Disciple of Christ

- Engage in the Seven Yokefellow Disciplines.
- Focus on inmates rather than themselves during local meetings.
- Listen to and encourage inmates without judgment.

Respect Prison Policies

- Cooperate with prison personnel.
- Refrain from giving or receiving any item to or from inmates.

Respect Yokefellow Policies

- Attend Yokefellow annual meetings, if possible.
- Complete Yokefellow recertification training regularly.
- Invite others to volunteer and encourage local church support.
- Notify State Developer about changes in contact information.
- Participate in local Yokefellow meetings regularly.
- Refrain from proclamation evangelism and Bible study in local meetings.
- Respect inmates, fellow volunteers, the Local Coordinator, and Yokefellow staff.

Local Yokefellow Meetings

Local Yokefellow meetings take place weekly. As Yokefellow volunteers meet with inmates week after week and month after month, inmates learn that volunteers truly care about them. As inmates receive this love, they also learn that God cares about them. Consistency is key to communicating God's love to inmates.

Local Yokefellow meetings have the following structure:

1. Opening prayer
2. Informal time to welcome new participants and set up small groups for sharing
3. Sharing & listening time (at least 45 minutes) in small groups for inmates to talk about anything they wish
4. Closing prayer

Sharing & Listening

Sharing & listening time accounts for the bulk of the meeting time and takes place in small groups, ideally with a 1:3-5 volunteer-to-inmate ratio, such as two volunteers seated with 6 to 10 inmates. Inmates should do most of the talking, with volunteers speaking only enough to communicate that they are listening and to encourage continued discussions.

As volunteers listen to inmates with focused attention, this communicates that inmates have value. The Christian worldview is that God created people with value; sin separated us from God; and then Jesus rescued us to restore us to relationship with God. Many inmates never learned that they have value, which erects a barrier to receiving Jesus as Savior and being restored in relationship to God. Listening with focused attention communicates to inmates that they have value, paving the way to receiving Jesus as Savior and establishing a relationship with God.

What Yokefellow is NOT

Because the focus of Yokefellow's ministry is communicating (through listening) that inmates have value, local Yokefellow groups do not engage in other types of Christian activities, such as proclamation evangelism or Bible study. (Yokefellow ministry is, by nature, inductive and relational evangelism. If an inmate initiates the topic, volunteers are encouraged to share the gospel and lead the inmate to Christ.) While these activities are good practices, they fall outside the scope of Yokefellow's ministry and should not take place in a local Yokefellow meeting. Volunteers who are interested in leading a Bible study for inmates or holding meetings that are evangelistic in nature should reach out to other prison ministries that engage in these activities at the local prison. Local Yokefellow meetings may not deviate from the sharing & listening structure as defined above.

Local Coordinator Role

Local Coordinators are vital to the health and growth of local Yokefellow ministries. Small groups need a leader to coordinate the administrative aspects. Even more importantly, Local Coordinators influence the local volunteers, keeping their focus on God's purpose and plan for the local ministry.

What a Local Coordinator Does

The Local Coordinator is responsible for engaging in the following tasks:

Communication with Yokefellow State Developer

- Communicate any areas of concern, such as the need for more volunteers, issues with prison personnel, or issues with volunteers.
- Maintain a current membership list of local volunteers, including the following information for each volunteer, and provide a copy to the State Developer:
 - First & last name
 - Mailing address (include street address, city, state, and zip code)
 - Email address (if actively used)
 - Phone number
- Notify the State Developer of changes in meeting times or to the membership list, including when volunteers leave the ministry.
- Submit Local Coordinator Quarterly Reports (see Appendix B).

Leadership

- Build morale, offer spiritual direction, and counsel volunteers on ministry matters.
- Encourage volunteers to attend the Yokefellow annual meeting and complete recertification training in accordance with Yokefellow policy.
- Maintain a positive attitude to help the volunteers stay positive.
- Model compliance with all Yokefellow and prison policies.
- Serve as an example of a disciple of Christ by engaging in the Seven Yokefellow Disciplines.

Meeting Logistics

- Coordinate visit arrangements with prison personnel 24+ hours in advance.
- Ensure local meetings comply with Yokefellow policies.
- Maintain the schedule for local meetings, including time and place, and notify volunteers about any changes.
- Serve as liaison between volunteers and prison personnel in matters related to Yokefellow ministry.

How Yokefellow Staff Can Support You

The State Developer and Executive Director are happy to provide support in the following ways. Please email the State Developer at yokefellownc.statedeveloper@gmail.com or call 336-740-0392 to request assistance.

- Answer questions about Yokefellow policy
- Brainstorm ideas for growing a healthier local group
- Encourage you when you are frustrated
- Intervene with difficult volunteers or prison personnel
- Provide training for local volunteers
- Recruit more volunteers for your local group
- Troubleshoot concerns

How You Can Support Yokefellow Staff

Yokefellow Staff rely on Local Coordinators to keep them informed about the state of the local ministry. Here are some specific ways you can assist Yokefellow Staff:

Keep Volunteer List Up-to-date

To ensure volunteers receive quarterly newsletters, training invitations, and other mailings, the database at the Yokefellow Office needs to stay current. Please notify the State Developer of any changes to the local volunteer list, including...

- Addition of new volunteers
- Removal of volunteers who have left the ministry
- Changes to volunteer mailing address, email address, or phone number

Share Feedback

What is the Yokefellow staff doing well? How could the Yokefellow staff provide better support? Provide candid feedback on how Yokefellow staff could work better with Local Coordinators as a team.

Submit Local Coordinator Quarterly Reports

A copy of the Local Coordinator Quarterly Report is provided in Appendix B. This form can be submitted via email to yokefellowprisonministrync@gmail.com or mailed to Yokefellow Prison Ministry of NC, P.O. Box 38964, Greensboro, NC 27438. Forms are due by the 15th of Jan, Apr, Jul, and Oct for the previous quarter.

Basic Information

Basic information about each local group is requested to ensure current information is shared on the website and newsletter. Information that will be shared publicly includes...

- Local Coordinator's name (contact information only shared with express permission)
- Day and time local meetings take place
- Frequency of meetings (weekly, biweekly, monthly, etc.)

Please notify the Executive Director at yokefellowprisonministrync@gmail.com if you grant permission to share your email and/or phone number on the website and newsletter. If you do not grant permission, potential volunteers will be directed to the State Developer instead.

Statistics

When applying for grants, Yokefellow needs to present current statistics about volunteers across the state. One of Yokefellow's strongest assets when applying for grants is its diversity. Having current statistics about diversity in regards to age, race, gender, and denomination can strengthen Yokefellow's grant applications.

Be sure to record the number of volunteers and inmates who attend each meeting for the month. The Yokefellow model works best with a 1:3-5 volunteer-to-inmate ratio, such as two volunteers seated with 6 to 10 inmates. This information helps Yokefellow staff identify which local groups are in greatest need of assistance in recruiting more volunteers.

Contact Information for New Volunteers

Please provide full name, mailing address, email address, and phone number for each new volunteer who joins the local group. The State Developer will update Yokefellow's records, which will ensure the new volunteer receives newsletters, training invitations, and other mailings. Please only provide email addresses that are actively used.

Newly Inactive Volunteers

If a volunteer has moved to inactive status in the past month (plans to miss at least one month of meetings), please provide the volunteer's full name and whether the inactivation is temporary (such as for medical leave) or permanent (such as upon resignation or death). The State Developer will remove permanently inactive volunteers from the database so they will no longer receive mailings. Volunteers who are only inactive temporarily will continue to receive mailings.

Facebook & Twitter News

Yokefellow is striving to build an active presence on social media through Facebook, which will assist in recruiting younger volunteers as well as let the community know about the difference Yokefellow is making in the lives of inmates across the state. An active Facebook page filled with success stories will also be helpful in obtaining grants. Please provide at least two “success stories” each quarter that may be shared on social media. No identifying information will be used. See page 2 of the Local Coordinator Quarterly Report for examples.

Thank You!

Once again, thank you for all you do as a Local Coordinator for Yokefellow! The Board of Directors and staff greatly appreciate all of the time and energy you put into serving in this capacity.

If you have any questions about this manual or Yokefellow policies in general, please email the State Developer at yokefellownc.statedeveloper@gmail.com or call 336-740-0392. Remember that you are not alone – the Executive Director and State Developer are available to support you as we all work together to grow this ministry and follow where God is leading.

Appendix A: Yokefellow Prison Ministry of North Carolina Volunteer Application Packet

Thank you for your interest in volunteering with Yokefellow Prison Ministry of N.C., Inc. We appreciate your interest and look forward to learning more about you.

All volunteers with Yokefellow Prison Ministry are required to submit a completed volunteer application packet to the Yokefellow Prison Ministry office before they will be approved to volunteer with a local Yokefellow group. The volunteer application packet includes the following documents:

- **Volunteer Application Form** – Completed, signed, and dated by the applicant and submitted to the Yokefellow Prison Ministry office
- **Letter of Good Standing** – Completed, signed, and dated by the applicant's pastor (applicant must have been active with a local church for at least six months) and submitted directly to the Yokefellow Prison Ministry office on church letterhead
- **Two Letters of Recommendation** – Completed, signed, and dated by two non-family members and submitted directly to the Yokefellow Prison Ministry office

The Volunteer Application Form, Letter of Good Standing, and Letters of Recommendation should be submitted to the Yokefellow Prison Ministry office using one of the following methods:

- **Email:** yokefellownc.statedeveloper@gmail.com
- **Fax:** 336-370-6321
- **Mail:** P.O. Box 38964, Greensboro, NC 27438

Call (336) 724-9801 with questions about the volunteer application process. To learn more about the ministry, visit our website at <http://www.yokefellowprisonministry.org>.

Thank you again for your interest!

Yokefellow Prison Ministry of North Carolina Volunteer Application Form

This form should be completed, signed, and dated by the **applicant** and then submitted to the Yokefellow Prison Ministry office using one of the following methods:

- **Email:** yokefellownc.statedeveloper@gmail.com
- **Fax:** 336-370-6321
- **Mail:** P.O. Box 38964, Greensboro, NC 27438

Call (336) 724-9801 with questions about completing this form.

Basic Information

Full Name: _____

Address: _____

(City) _____ (State) _____ (Zip Code) _____

Daytime Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____ Evening Phone: _____

Email Address: _____

Date of Birth: _____ Male: _____ Female: _____

Do you have any medical conditions or disabilities that may restrict your volunteer services? If yes, please specify. _____

Have you ever been incarcerated? If yes, how long ago? _____

Emergency Contact Information:

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Volunteer Interest

Why are you interested in volunteering with a Christian prison ministry? _____

Which prison(s) are you interested in volunteering with? _____

Have you ever volunteered with a prison ministry or do you have other related experience? If yes, share details. _____

Yokefellow Prison Ministry of N.C., Inc. is a Christian interdenominational and racially-diverse prison ministry. Do you have any concerns about volunteering for a ministry with this focus? If yes, please share your concerns. _____

To be approved as a volunteer, applicants must complete training for Yokefellow Prison Ministry of N.C., Inc. as well as for the local prison. To complete the Yokefellow Prison Ministry training, applicants may choose to attend one of the live training sessions offered in different parts of the state throughout the year or to complete the training online. To be approved to volunteer in a local prison, the applicant must follow the instructions provided by prison personnel, which include submitting to a background check and completing the training provided by the prison. Applicants will be unable to volunteer for Yokefellow Prison Ministry until both trainings are completed.

I have read and understand the information provided in this volunteer application form and agree that I will not attempt to volunteer in a local prison for Yokefellow until I have completed all training requirements for Yokefellow Prison Ministry of N.C., Inc. and the local prison. I certify to the best of my knowledge and belief that all statements in this volunteer application form are true, correct, complete, and made in good faith.

Applicant Signature: _____

Date: _____

Yokefellow Prison Ministry of North Carolina Letter of Good Standing

For the Applicant

Because Yokefellow Prison Ministry of N.C., Inc. is a Christian ministry, volunteers are required to be in good standing with a local church for at least six months before applying to volunteer. Call (336) 724-9801 with questions about this policy.

Complete the following information and then give this completed form to the pastor of your local church for submission to Yokefellow.

Applicant's Name: _____

Church Name: _____

How long have you been active in this local church? _____

For the Pastor

The above-named applicant has applied to volunteer with Yokefellow Prison Ministry of N.C., Inc., which is a Christian interdenominational and racially-diverse prison ministry. To learn more about this ministry, please visit the website at yokefellowprisonministry.org.

Because Yokefellow is a Christian ministry, volunteers are required to be active and in good standing with a local church for at least six months. Please write a letter of good standing on behalf of the above-named applicant on your church letterhead. In this letter, address how long the applicant has been active in your local church, whether you believe the applicant would be a good fit for a prison ministry, and why you believe this. Sign and date the letter and then submit the letter and this form directly to the Yokefellow Prison Ministry office using one of the following methods:

- **Email:** yokefellownc.statedeveloper@gmail.com
- **Fax:** 336-370-6321
- **Mail:** P.O. Box 38964, Greensboro, NC 27438

Call (336) 724-9801 with questions about completing and submitting a letter of good standing.

Your letter of good standing will be kept confidential. Because the applicant will be interacting with inmates, Yokefellow needs to ensure that the applicant is a good fit for this ministry. Please be candid to assist Yokefellow in making this assessment. Thank you for taking the time to complete a letter of good standing on behalf of the applicant.

Yokefellow Prison Ministry of North Carolina Letter of Recommendation

For the Applicant

Yokefellow Prison Ministry of N.C., Inc. requires two letters of recommendation from non-family members before an applicant may be approved to volunteer in a prison. References must have known you for at least six months. Call (336) 724-9801 with questions about this policy.

Complete the following information and then give this completed form to two references for submission to Yokefellow.

Applicant's Name: _____

Reference's Name: _____

How long have you known each other? _____

For the Reference

The above-named applicant has applied to volunteer with Yokefellow Prison Ministry of N.C., Inc., which is a Christian interdenominational and racially-diverse prison ministry. To learn more about this ministry, please visit the website at yokefellowprisonministry.org.

Because Yokefellow is a prison ministry, volunteers are required to submit two letters of recommendation from non-family members who have known them for at least six months. Please write a letter of recommendation on behalf of the above-named applicant and address how long you have known the applicant, whether you believe the applicant would be a good fit for a prison ministry, and why you believe this. Sign and date the letter and then submit the letter and this form directly to the Yokefellow Prison Ministry office using one of the following methods:

- **Email:** yokefellownc.statedeveloper@gmail.com
- **Fax:** 336-370-6321
- **Mail:** P.O. Box 38964, Greensboro, NC 27438

Call (336) 724-9801 with questions about completing and submitting your letter.

Your letter of recommendation will be kept confidential. Because the applicant will be interacting with inmates, Yokefellow needs to ensure that the applicant is a good fit for this ministry. Please be candid to assist Yokefellow in making this assessment. Thank you for taking the time to complete a letter of recommendation on behalf of the applicant.

Yokefellow Prison Ministry of North Carolina Letter of Recommendation

For the Applicant

Yokefellow Prison Ministry of N.C., Inc. requires two letters of recommendation from non-family members before an applicant may be approved to volunteer in a prison. References must have known you for at least six months. Call (336) 724-9801 with questions about this policy.

Complete the following information and then give this completed form to two references for submission to Yokefellow.

Applicant's Name: _____

Reference's Name: _____

How long have you known each other? _____

For the Reference

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Appendix B: Yokefellow Prison Ministry of North Carolina Local Coordinator Quarterly Report

Local Coordinator Name: _____ Prison: _____

Day and time local meetings take place: _____

Frequency of meetings (weekly, biweekly, monthly, etc.): _____

Month: Jan/Apr/Jul/Oct Year: _____ ****Submit by the 15th for preceding quarter.****

How many active volunteers do you have? _____ Inactive volunteers? _____

Diversity Statistics

_____ % over age 65; _____ % under age 65; _____ % male; _____ % female

_____ % African-American; _____ % Asian; _____ % Caucasian; _____ % Other

How many denominations (including nondenominational) are represented? _____

Record the average number of volunteers and inmates who attended each meeting this quarter.

Meetings for...	Average # volunteers attending meetings	Average # inmates attending meetings
Month 1		
Month 2		
Month 3		

Provide names and contact information for new volunteers.

First & Last Name	Complete Mailing Address	Email Address	Phone Number

Provide names and status for newly inactive volunteers (plans to miss at least 1 month of meetings).

First & Last Name	Is inactive status temporary or permanent?



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