

# Glad Tidings

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF YOKEFELLOW PRISON MINISTRY

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**Yokefellow Prison Ministry remembers Rev. Jerry Dwight Murray, one of the three founders of this ministry, who passed away on July 15.**

## Returning Citizen Blesses Local Church

On Sunday, September 27, Yokefellow graduate and returning citizen Rickey Vaughn blessed Guilford College United Methodist Church in Greensboro with a brief testimony and original music. Rickey attended Yokefellow meetings while he was incarcerated and has also attended Virtual Aftercare meetings since his release a few months ago after 28 years in prison.

Here is part of the testimony he shared:

*"I've been in prison for 28 years. I've been through a lot. I've been all the way down to the bottom. There was times when I didn't want to live. I used to pray every night for God to take me in my sleep. But not anymore.*

*"A few years ago, I surrendered to Jesus Christ and accepted him as my Lord and my Savior. And that's exactly who he is. And now I want to live. I want to live. I want to try to be the best person I can."*

Rickey writes gospel music and shared five of his original songs, some of which he wrote while he was in prison. Titles of his songs include *His Grace is*

*Amazing and Don't Stop Believing in the Light.* Members of the congregation teared up as Rickey soulfully sang these beautiful lyrics:

*"God's grace is amazing. It's made my life so different. Ah, the way He welcomes me to His Kingdom, and he calls me His child. God's grace is amazing, so amazing to me. Oh, yes it is. And I'm so thankful that God's in my life."*

*"Just remember that everything don't always work out right. Just keep on following God's light 'cause we know God's got a plan. Don't stop believing. Never stop believing. You'll be able to be in that light and take that stand and be with God. Don't stop believing."*



Returning Citizen Rickey Vaughn shares original music at Guilford College United Methodist Church in Greensboro.

***"I surrendered to Jesus Christ and accepted him as my Lord and my Savior...and now I want to live...I want to try to be the best person I can be."***  
~ Rickey Vaughn  
Returning Citizen

# IN THE SPOTLIGHT

## Lee Bissett, Returning Citizen who attends Yokefellow Virtual Aftercare meetings



Spotlight artwork courtesy of <https://openclipart.org/detail/284958/theater-or-studio-spotlight-on-roof-mount>

### Were you involved in Yokefellow meetings in prison?

No. In fact, I was housed in 5 different prisons and never heard of this ministry.

### How did you learn about Virtual Aftercare?

My neighbor is on the Board of Directors and invited me to attend.

### What drew you to attend Virtual Aftercare meetings?

When I was in prison, I was surprised by how many people kept coming back after being released, some for the 3rd, 4th, or even 5th time. I wanted to figure out a way to help once I got out. Having this emotional support is helpful for me as well as others coming out of prison. I try to attend every week.



### So your goal in attending Virtual Aftercare meetings is not only to be served but also to serve?

Yes. When I was in prison, I saw what a difference prison ministry makes. While some aren't looking to change, many are, and the personal contact from volunteers is HUGE in prison. It give them hope.

### As you know, Virtual Aftercare is provided through video or phone. Is that helpful?

It's wonderful! While person-to-person is best, noncontact forms of connection are also helpful because they provide emotional support. It keeps those who attend motivated and gives them hope.

### Hope seems to be a recurring theme.

Yes! Many people in prison, particularly long-timers, lose connection with their families and really look forward to visits from volunteers. They need help on both the inside and the outside. The fact that there are volunteers out there who truly want to help is HUGE in giving them hope. It's very much needed.

### What else would you like to share with our readers?

Virtual Aftercare is a wonderful idea that is very much needed. I encourage your readers to help get the word out that this form of support is available. There is definitely need. You just need to get word to the people who need it.

## Yokefellow Holds Virtual Town Hall Meeting

On September 26, Yokefellow held its first Virtual Town Hall meeting on Zoom. Twenty-seven Board members and volunteers from as far west as Wilkesboro and as far east as Cape Carteret logged in to join with Staff to discuss the state of the ministry while prisons remain closed to volunteers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

President David Morton opened the meeting with a prayer and devotional. Executive Director Vita Allgood shared how Yokefellow's shift in focus toward providing Aftercare services to returning citizens aligns with the ministry's stated purpose in the 1972 Articles of Incorpora-

tion: "To provide continuing concern, guidance and redemptive fellowship for prison inmates when they are released into the community." State Developer Carlton Gooding talked about the recent launch of Yokefellow's newest arm of ministry, Virtual Aftercare.

Regional discussions were held so volunteers in the same region of the state could share ideas for staying connected with other volunteers during the pandemic. This was

followed by an Open Mic Q&A in which Board President David Morton invited any and all questions about the state of the ministry. Feedback about this meeting has

been positive, so Yokefellow plans to hold more Town Hall meetings in the future to help volunteers stay connected.



# MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT

Dear Precious Friends,

When so much of what we typically do is not possible now as Yokefellow volunteers, I start thinking about what it means to be a Christian representing Christ to the world. When a child is baptized or an adult joins the church, we say,

*“With God’s help, we will proclaim the good news and live according to the example of Christ. We will surround these with a community of love and forgiveness, that they may grow in their trust of God, and be found faithful in their service to others.”*

That’s Yokefellow, and we have performed these tasks of providing emotional support to countless in our care and service in our nation’s prisons. We proclaim the care of Christ by listening to others in Jesus’ name. We respond by listening.

We say and demonstrate the love of Christ to those who are in our congregations and with those we serve as Yokefellows, but we are also saying these things to ourselves about who we are and what we ascribe to as the body of Christ.

I have thought about the people of the church as a community of people who are brought together by a common story about how God, in His love, reaches out to us and calls us to live lives of hope. Jesus said, *“I have come that you might have life in abundance”* (John 10:10). And he said, *“I am the way, the truth and the life”* (John 14:6). When we have a relationship with Christ and choose to follow him, we realize a way and leadership and grace that shapes who we are and how we live. It’s a story to share to the masses, and it is a proclamation that is timeless and strong.

Even if we are not doing all we usually do to connect by volunteering in prison settings, we continue to be shaped and created by the good news that God provides us in Jesus Christ. It starts with each of us. And we are commanded to share this good news whatever the circumstances. We know the stain of human sin and the brokenness of the world, and we live with confidence that nothing can ever separate us from the love of God. God has plans for all of us, and we can live by hope.

One of those plans in these times of isolation is our newly formed “Aftercare” initiative. That’s right. We can have Yokefellow meetings with newly released citizens via Zoom. And we are preparing earnestly to regather in our prison locations when we are able. Please stay current and practice our Yokefellow disciplines so that you’ll be ready to volunteer when the time comes.



## Help Wanted

**Can you help distribute Yokefellow Virtual Aftercare brochures in your local community? Ideas include homeless shelters, probation offices, libraries, thrift shops, churches, local media, and local nonprofits that serve returning citizens.**

**Brochures can be downloaded and printed from the Yokefellow**

**website. Alternatively, Yokefellow Staff is happy to print out brochures and snail mail them to you for local distribution.**

**Contact State Developer Carlton Gooding at 336-740-0392 or [yokefellownc.statedeveloper@gmail.com](mailto:yokefellownc.statedeveloper@gmail.com) for distribution ideas.**

**Thanks for your help!**

I encourage you to reach out to our Yokefellow staff to find new ways to share the hope of Christ with others. Yokefellow is operational, and I encourage you to participate. Please also attend our **virtual Yokefellow Annual Meeting October 24, 2020 via Zoom**. A dynamic program is planned to bring you up-to-date with Yokefellow news and opportunities.

Hope and pray with me, friends, as we use our time to build a different world ... a world where we take care of each other, and a world where we can be gentle with ourselves, less judgmental, and more

forgiving and merciful. Let’s work on our level of kindness and providing others grace. Let us have a hope where we can lean into God and keep moving. Let’s reflect and take heart with the words from Paul in his letter to the Romans: *“And hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us”* (Romans 5:5).

My best to you as we journey together.

David Morton  
President

## You are Invited

**Please join us on Saturday, 10/24/20, at 10:00 a.m. for Yokefellow’s 51st Annual Meeting on Zoom.**

**Email [yokefellowprisonistrync@gmail.com](mailto:yokefellowprisonistrync@gmail.com) or call 336-724-9801 to register and for login information. Limited to 100 attendees.**

# Ways to Financially Support Yokefellow

## Facebook Fundraiser

Is your birthday around the corner? Consider hosting a Birthday Fundraiser on your Facebook page. Here's how to do it:

1. Go to your Facebook account.
2. Click **Home** at the top.
3. Click **Fundraisers** in the left column.
4. Click **Select Nonprofit**.
5. Type **Yokefellow** in the search bar and then click to select it.

6. Type in the requested information:
  - How much money do you want to raise?
  - Select Currency.
  - When should the fundraiser end?
  - What's the title of your fundraiser?
  - Why are you raising money?
7. Select a cover photo.
8. Click **Create**.

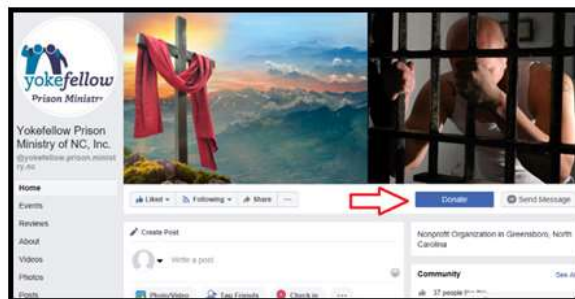
## #GivingTuesday

#GivingTuesday, on **December 1**, is a global generosity movement that encourages the community to support nonprofits that are making a difference in the world. How can you participate?

1. Go to Yokefellow's Facebook page: [facebook.com/yokefellow.prison.ministry.nc](https://facebook.com/yokefellow.prison.ministry.nc)

2. Click the **Donate** button (below the header on the right).
3. Enter the donation information.
4. Click **Donate**.

Thank you for your support!



RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

facebook.com/yokefellow.prison.ministry.nc  
yokefellowprisonministry.org  
Yokefellowprisonministrync@gmail.com  
336-724-9801  
Greensboro, NC 27438  
P.O. Box 38964

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