



Yoked Up

A newsletter from the Yokefellow Prison Ministry of North Carolina



A Letter from the President of the Board

Dear Friends,

We are all in prisons of some kind. Some of our prisons have iron bars; some of our own making. And the truth is, the only out is with us helping each other and through God's grace. That is why we go. Yokefellow Prison Ministry offers unique opportunities for personal spiritual growth because volunteers get personally involved in the gospel basics: witnessing, listening, and encouragement. And when Christians witness for the Lord, it will not be long before the church grows. Here are some things to ponder:

- A prison is a spiritual field of harvest. There are inmates, many of whom are genuinely seeking change, stability, and love in their lives.
- Ministry with the incarcerated revitalizes the spiritual lives of volunteers (with positive results in their churches).
- Volunteering teaches deep spiritual lessons. We learn lessons about forgiving, restoring, and praying. It teaches basic and practical lessons about listening, patience, and communication.
- Volunteering promotes cooperation and goodwill among believers, from different denominations, socioeconomic backgrounds, and theological points of view. Paul admonished us to keep our eyes on Christ and we can find this truth as we volunteer.
- Volunteering gives us the opportunity to share our experiences and testimony at the local church.
- Prison ministry is a shower of blessings for all involved. This ministry shows us why indeed we are all brothers and sisters united in Christ.

We are given a wonderful choice in our lives. It is my prayer that you choose to be yoked with Christ. The foundation of Yokefellow Prison Ministry of North Carolina is choosing to be yoked with and to Jesus Christ. This image grows out of Christ's invitation in Matthew 1:28-30 to us. We do not have to pull the load alone; we can partner with Christ, moreover, we are called to walk with and share our brother's and sister's burdens.

We can only share with another the amount of grace that we have received ourselves. It is my prayer that we extend the gift of grace to others, as freely as we ourselves received it.

Thank you to all who serve as Yokefellow volunteers in North Carolina prisons, post-incarceration Aftercare programs, and individuals who support our work and ministry prayerfully and financially. Lastly, thank you for providing me the privilege of journeying with you as Yokefellow Prison Ministry of North Carolina continues to grow and embrace the opportunities to serve the Lord. I pray we will be "yoked" as we serve together. Please continue to pray that God will lead us and that He will be glorified in 2023. Sincerely, I pray for us all and God's ministry to those who are incarcerated.

Grace and Peace,
David Morton



News About Giving Statements

Giving Statements for the year 2022 are in the process of being completed and will be going in the mail next week. In 2023, Yokefellow Prison Ministry will move to sending Donation Receipts for every donation made via email (if we have an email address on file.) This will help us be better stewards of your contribution and to ensure that your support is going to the ministries we operate rather than to office supply and postage costs.

If you would like to continue receiving your giving statements by mail we are happy to do this. Additionally, if you do not receive a Giving Statement for 2022 by January 31, 2023 please contact Jennifer Burns at jburns@yokefellowprisonministry.org or 336-681-6835.



A Theme for the New Year: Sustainability

It should come as surprise to no one that, over the past three years, Yokefellow Prison Ministry has been focused on surviving. 2020 saw the prisons, the heart of our ministry for nearly 50 years at the time, closed to our volunteers. In 2021, our theme was PIVOT – a focus on reimagining what Yokefellow could be and who we could reach with the lifesaving message of the gospel. In 2022, the theme was RESET as we began reentering the prison facilities and trying to get back to normal.

As we move into 2023 Yokefellow Prison Ministry is no longer focused on trying to stay afloat. We are looking beyond this year and fully into the future and what the next 50 years of ministry look like. Through God's grace and faithfulness, we've been able to do so much more than merely survive – we have been able to expand. In 2022, the Residential Reentry ministry that was launched as part of our PIVOT has grown from two locations to eight that are now operational. We have resumed ministry in 22 of the 37 prison facilities that were active before the pandemic. Doors have been opened into new facilities that have never had Yokefellow meetings in the past. We have come to understand, as so many others have, that things will never be exactly as they were in the spring of 2020 but we know now that there is an opportunity for something even better. Now, the questions we prayerfully seek to answer in 2023 is "How do we sustain what we've built? How do we sustain this growth?"

We are told in Psalm 55, "Cast your burden on the Lord, and he will sustain you; he will never permit the righteous to be moved." We believe this for Yokefellow Prison Ministry – we were created by God for the good of God's people but to continue the work we do we need your help. Please prayerfully consider how you may be called to support the work of the Yokefellow Prison Ministry whether that is volunteering in a prison facility or residential reentry or online. It might be contributing financially to support our staff and their work to recruit and train volunteers and work alongside the administration staff and chaplains in the prisons and other facilities. It might be as a prayer warrior praying for doors to open, hearts to soften, and for people to accept Jesus Christ as their own personal savior. Whatever way it may be, God and God's people are the source of sustainability for Yokefellow. We hope that you will join us as we continue forward for the glory of God.



Board of Directors Meeting: Friday, February 3 at 10:30 AM

After a hiatus over the holidays, the Board of Directors and Committees are ready to get back to work praying and planning for the new year! Our first Board of Directors Meeting will be hosted via Zoom on Friday, February 3 from 10:30 AM to 12:00. An Agenda and link for the Zoom meeting will be sent via email during the last week of January.

If you have a topic for discussion at this meeting please direct your request to Board President David Morton at dmorton10@centurylink.net.

Blue Card Training for Volunteers



As prison facilities continue to reopen to Yokefellow volunteers, many facilities are resuming their PREA/ "Blue Card" Training classes. Yokefellow Prison Ministry staff has found that much of these operations vary from facility to facility as they each navigate their unique situations with COVID19 counts and staffing shortages.

If you are a Yokefellow volunteer wanting to resume ministry or potentially find a new capacity to volunteer, please contact your Local Coordinator so they can get you the information you need. If you need assistance, please contact Carlton Gooding at cgooding@yokefellowprisonministry.org or 336-740-0392.